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Yumin Meng
University of Massachusetts Amherst

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**A STUDY OF DIFFERENT DISCOURSE PATTERNS PREFERRED BY
NATIVE-ENGLISH AND NATIVE-CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN
WRITTEN ENGLISH**

A Dissertation Presented

by

YUMIN MENG

Submitted to the Graduate School of the
University of Massachusetts Amherst in partial fulfillment
of the requirements for the degree of

DOCTOR OF EDUCATION

September 1999

School of Education

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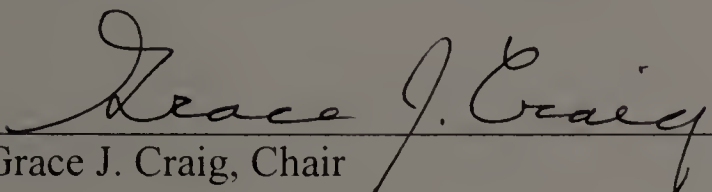
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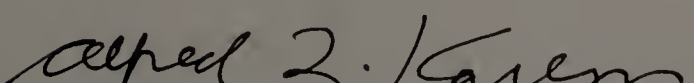
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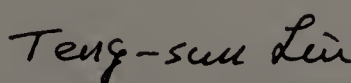
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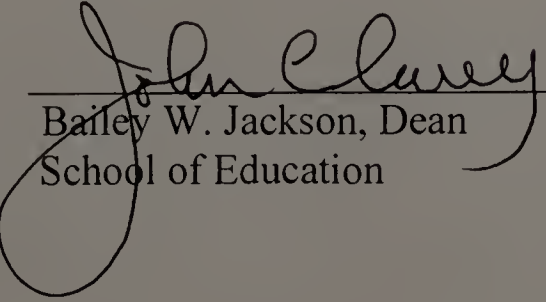
YUMIN MENG

Approved as to style and content by:


Grace J. Craig, Chair


Alfred L. Karlson, Member


Teng-Sun Liu, Member


Bailey W. Jackson, Dean
School of Education

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ABSTRACT

A STUDY OF DIFFERENT DISCOURSE PATTERNS PREFERRED BY NATIVE-ENGLISH AND NATIVE-CHINESE GRADUATE STUDENTS IN WRITTEN ENGLISH

SEPTEMBER 1999

YUMIN MENG, B.A, BEIJING UNIVERSITY

M.Ed., BEIJING TEACHERS' COLLEGE

M.Ed., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Ed.D., UNIVERSITY OF MASSACHUSETTS AMHERST

Directed by: Professor Grace Craig

The purpose of this study was to investigate comparatively the discourse patterns in written English between native English and Chinese-English speakers. Two main perspectives related to the roots of different discourse patterns were examined. One perspective, proposed by Young and others, suggests that the native Chinese speakers may transfer their culturally valued discourse patterns from Chinese into English. The other perspective, proposed by Tyler and others, suggests that the 'unexpected' Chinese-English discourse patterns may be due to accumulated linguistic miscues, such as grammar, syntax and lexicon errors. In this study, it is proposed that a discourse pattern may be guided by the cognitive strategies that developed from early socialization and such cognitive strategies may be independent of one's language proficiency. To test this proposal, a Native Chinese sample with advanced English proficiency was compared with

a comparable highly educated Native English sample, to see if discourse pattern differences emerged despite advanced linguistic proficiency.

Nine subjects, in each group, were selected from native English and Chinese-English speaking, advanced graduated students, all of whom displayed advanced English proficiency. Subjects responded in written English paragraphs to a common projective set of six ordered pictures. The written samples were analyzed in three ways: grammar and spelling check, comparison on four formal linguistic aspects, and the examination and comparison of six discourse features within and between the two groups

The results indicate no significant differences on grammar and spelling and similar linguistic competence between the two groups. All six discourse features showed a significantly consistent pattern within the Chinese-English group, while four of the six were significant within the Native-English group. The pattern of the six features, as a whole, showed a significantly consistent pattern within each group and a significant difference between the two groups. It was concluded that discourse patterns emerge independent of one's language proficiency. These contrasting discourse patterns were discussed with respect to the influence of divergent cultural values and early socialization. Further studies are needed to further identify the roots and stability of these cross cultural discourse patterns.

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CHAPTER I

THE PROBLEM

Introduction

Studies have shown that Chinese-English users often produce English that is perceived as inappropriate and unexpected from the perspective of native English users. The perception of unexpected Chinese-English discourse patterns may be a complex of various causes. Among them, different preferences of discourse patterns between speakers of native English and Chinese may play a significant role. Researchers suggested that Chinese-English users are often perceived as making points in a way that is difficult for Westerners to follow (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Tyler, 1992; Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Creel, 1953; Smith, 1894). As a result, misunderstandings and the associated frustration are frequently involved in communication between native English and Chinese-English users (Young, 1982, 1994; Tyler, 1992; Tyler & Bro, 1992, 1993; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Matalene, 1985; Gumperz, 1994, 1982).

Do Chinese-English speakers often structure their thoughts and make a point in a way different from the way of native English speaker? What is a distinct way that Chinese-English speakers tend to employ in their language discourse? Is it a common pattern or varied from one individual to another? From the viewpoint of inter-personal relationships, a discourse pattern may be considered as a cognitive strategy (Hatch, 1992), which may be decided by two kinds of factors: the individual's judgement and

selection under the particular circumstances, and the social expectations and cultural conventions under the circumstances. Do speakers of native English and Chinese-English prefer to choose different discourse patterns under similar circumstances? Or, do the unexpected Chinese-English expressions only represent individual linguistic mistakes in common? If there are particular discourse patterns preferred by native English and Chinese-English speakers, respectively, what might they be? The interest of this study was to find out, (a) whether or not there is a common pattern or structure in the Chinese-English discourse, and (b) if yes, what are the distinct structural features that contribute to the unexpected pattern in a particular situation?

Statement of the Problem Situation

Several studies have been conducted to investigate unexpected discourse patterns in the population of Chinese-English speakers. In general, there is no disagreement on the conclusion that it seems the Chinese-English speakers do tend to organize their expressions in a different way from that of native English-speakers. However, there are two major perspectives represented by these studies on the causal factors of the unexpected Chinese-English discourse. One perspective tends to attribute them to linguistic effects, while the other tends to attribute them, at least in part, to non-linguistic effects.

The Influence of Cultural Values on Language Expression

Researchers who hold the non-linguistic-effects perspective believe that the unexpected Chinese-English discourse pattern is fostered by native Chinese cultural values. They believe, in general, that a language discourse pattern is shaped by the user's cultural experiences. The language discourse pattern is not only represented in a linguistic form, but also represented in a socially and culturally accepted form (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991). These researchers argue that individuals have been well prepared to meet the standards of ones' native cultural values in public language expressions. In a second language performance, such as in the Chinese-English discourse, the effect of socialized values from one's native culture may be even more salient than linguistic factors in one's selection of discourse pattern or organization (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985).

According to these researchers, when native Chinese speakers are using English, they may have unconsciously transformed the discourse patterns, which fit their native language and culture, into English. However, when the transformed Chinese discourse patterns do not meet the public expectation of native English speakers, the Chinese-English discourse would be considered inappropriate and unexpected. As a result, miscommunication may happen between the native English and Chinese-English speakers (Young, 1982, 1994; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991).

These researchers believe that being influenced by the native cultural effects, as well by linguistic factors, the Chinese-English speakers tend to organize their English expressions in a way that may not be expected by the native English speakers (Young,

1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991). They have pointed out that cultural values and social preparation have consistent influences on the language performance of both native English and Chinese speakers. When the Chinese-English discourse is perceived and interpreted by the value of native English speakers, the contrasting value and expectation held by the native English speakers lead to their unexpected perceptions (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985).

As a solution, researchers who hold the non-linguistic-effects perspective have suggested that a key approach to reduce the miscommunication between native English and Chinese speakers is to help each other to understand more about Western and Eastern cultural values (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Scollon & Scollon-Wong, 1991).

It is worth mentioning that Young conducted interviews of Chinese-English speakers, who had different careers and educational backgrounds in the United States and Hong Kong. According to Young (1982), her interviewees reasoned the ways they chose to express their thoughts in English was by using the standards of their native cultural values. Similar responses were highly consistent among her interviewees in the US and Hong Kong.

However, Young and other researchers did not efficiently separate the non-linguistic effect from linguistic factors. Further studies are needed to demonstrate or test their arguments.

Linguistic Effects on the Chinese-English Discourse

The other perspective is represented by Tyler's work (Tyler, 1988, 1992; Tyler & Bro, 1993, 1992). Tyler and her colleagues concluded that the unexpected Chinese-English discourse was primarily a result of linguistic errors made by Chinese-English speakers. These researchers suggested that the misuse of grammatical aspects, such as mistakes in tense, in the agreement between the noun and verb, or missing discourse cues, were the significant factors that led to unexpected Chinese-English discourses. Based on linguistic analyses, they argued that misusing the lexical markers, tense, and other grammatical aspects of English were key factors creating unexpected Chinese-English expressions (Tyler & Nagy, 1985, 1987; Tyler, 1992, Tyler & Bro, 1992, 1993). Their conclusion was that the unexpected Chinese-English may be better understood as the accumulative result of interactive miscues at the discourse level. The influential effect on the Chinese-English discourse may be accounted for by the failure of providing linguistic markers, such as tenses and lexical specification, in syntactical incorporation at the level of discourse structure (Tyler and Bro, 1992).

The solution of reducing miscommunication between native English and Chinese-English speakers, suggested by these researchers, was to improve the English proficiency of non-English speakers so that they use English grammar correctly (Tyler, 1992, Tyler and Bro, 1992).

These researchers attributed the unexpected discourse pattern of non-native English speakers merely to accumulated linguistic mistakes, and thus dismissed the role that cognitive strategies played on the discourse pattern in social activities. In their

studies, the unexpected Chinese-English discourse was treated as simply the result of insufficient English proficiency of Chinese-English speakers. This argument seems to ignore the other factors of socialization commonly studied in cross-language studies.

Purpose of This Study

This study was conducted to investigate the above two perspectives by employing qualitative analysis and comparison between groups of native English and native Chinese speakers in written English. The purpose of this study was to find out whether or not the unexpected Chinese-English discourse is due exclusively to insufficient English proficiency of Chinese-English speakers, and whether or not a discourse pattern has its non-linguistic nature and functions as cognitive strategy. This second perspective may be more evident if such differential discourse pattern emerge in a population with high English proficiency.

Definition of Terms

The term “language discourse pattern” refers to the forms that one has chosen to structure one’s language expressions.

The term "Chinese-English users" refers to those whose native language is Chinese (standard mandarin, in this study) and who use English as a second language.

The terms, "Chinese-English users" and "native Chinese users", were used interchangeably in this study.

The term "Chinese-English" refers to the English produced by Chinese-English users. The term "native English users" refers to those who speak the Standard American English as their primary language.

The term "English proficiency" in this study has a narrow meaning. It refers to one's advanced knowledge on the linguistic properties in English. The term "linguistic properties" refers to the objective subsystems of language, such as grammar, syntax, vocabulary, and so forth.

The term "explicit cues" refers to the linguistic devices or markers that indicate the given physical feature of the testing material in structuring the given written task in this study. The term "implicit or semantic cues" refers to lexical markers that connect the content of testing material without indicating the given physical feature of the testing material.

Rationale and Theoretical Framework

This section attempts to clarify the independent characteristics of language discourse pattern. The clarification is expected to provide a clear distinction between the linguistic and non-linguistic aspects of language discourse.

Discourse Pattern as a Separable Cognitive Structure for Operating Language

This researcher tends to see a pattern of language discourse as like a relatively stable frame or cognitive pattern. The cognitive pattern of language discourse may have

an independent nature that is separable from other linguistic aspects in the cognitive processes of linguistic events. From this point of view, a discourse pattern may be attributed to a non-linguistic factor.

For the convenience of the study, it should be possible to distinguish between the principles or rules for structuring a discourse and those organizing linguistic materials. Cognitive strategies and criteria are the principles that structure an expression of one's thoughts and ideas in language discourse, while grammar is the set of rules that organize linguistic materials in language discourse. When one's thoughts are expressed via language, the criteria of a discourse and the grammar of the language may be closely related or even tangled, but they are never exactly the same. A discourse pattern is a social and cognitive strategy for desired social interactions, while the grammatical rules are for organizing the linguistic materials correctly. The same thoughts can be structured into different discourse patterns, explicit or implicit in language, while none of them may necessarily violate the grammatical rules.

The cognitively separable characteristics of a discourse pattern may also be evidenced by many cross-cultural and cross-linguistic studies that revealed that the discourse pattern is often transformed from one's first language into a second language performance (Young, 1982, 1994; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991). In other words, one's cognitive strategies for the discourse pattern takes charge of organizing an expression, irrespective of whether one is using first or second language. Some studies may not use the term "discourse pattern", but instead terms such as "traditional rhetoric" (Matalene, 1985) and "language convention" (Yumada, 1997). In a second language performance, such as Chinese-English, the native Chinese speaker seems to preferably employ the

discourse frame that has been firmly installed in his/her cognitive schemas, yet organized and polished with linguistic materials in the second language. In short, it is very reasonable to believe that a discourse pattern plays an independent cognitive role, particularly in the processes of using a second language.

Design of the Study

A comparison and qualitative analysis on certain discourse features in written-English has been conducted in this study. The subjects were two groups of graduate students – those who spoke standard American English and standard mandarin Chinese, respectively, as their first language. Subjects of two comparative groups were selected by their native language and roughly matched with respect to educational backgrounds, age and sex. Only Chinese-English speakers who have high English proficiency have been selected as subjects in this study. A score on the Test of English as a Foreign Language (TOEFL) has been employed as one measure of English proficiency for Chinese-English subjects. TOEFL is a standardized national test of English proficiency. It has been measured by a scale that ranged from 200 to 677 before July 1998, and after then, by a scale that ranges from 310 to 677 (TOEFL, 1999).

Subjects were required to write their responses to the given stimulus in paragraph form in English. The stimulus materials were designed as a series of common pictures without language involved. The pictures were shown in a fixed serial order. The structural relationship between each picture was intentionally ambiguous in order to

allow subjects wide latitude to choose the discourse pattern they prefer to structure the given written task in English.

Statement of Hypothesis

In this study, it was hypothesized that a discourse pattern is an independent cognitive factor in a linguistic event. It is even a non-linguistic variable in a second language performance. The researcher of this study believes that a discourse pattern is a cognitive strategy of language performance in social interactions. It more likely has been fostered by a user's cultural values of social activities since very early stages of life, and less likely decided by the user's linguistic proficiency of, particularly, a second language. A discourse pattern might belong to those cognitive frameworks that deal with views of the world and one's life experiences, and remain relatively stable in one's life journey. Meanwhile, linguistic proficiency might belong to those practical skills, which are possibly improved during a comparatively short period in one's life. It was hypothesized that native English and Chinese-English speakers would prefer different discourse patterns in written English. Furthermore, particular discourse-features would be consistently associated with the discourse pattern chosen by the Chinese-English group, while there would be comparatively stable features found in the Native-English group as well.

The Study Questions

The questions investigated in this study have attempted to identify an independent cognitive role of a discourse pattern from linguistic proficiency. Do Chinese-English speakers prefer particular discourse patterns that are different from that of native English speakers? If yes, what are the differences between the discourse patterns of native English and Chinese-English speakers? What are distinct structural features of the Chinese-English discourse? What are distinct structural features of discourse of native English speakers? Are the discourse features of the two groups consistent? Are they decided by the speakers' English proficiency? -- The investigation on this question may provide further evidence of whether a discourse pattern is an independent, transferable, and consistent cognitive factor, or it is mainly a linguistic dependent factor.

The investigation on the above questions has been designed to lend further support to the perspective that a language discourse pattern is guided by culturally shared social-cognitive strategies. These social-cognitive strategies may have been adopted as one's socialization, as Young (1982, 1994) and others (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Matalene, 1985; Et al) suggest.

Importance of the Study

The importance of this study is trying to separate one's cognitive strategies of discourse from one's English proficiency and to investigate the independent cognitive nature of discourse pattern in language expressions. The researcher has attempted to

analyze language discourse pattern from a non-traditional linguistic angle, and argued that cognitive strategies on discourse patterns are an independent factor in language discourse. The cognitive strategies, fostered by cultural values and socialization during one's language developmental period, have been attributed to the differences that have existed in discourse patterns between native English and Chinese-English speakers. The separation of discourse pattern from one's linguistic proficiency may have provided a unique study angle to further explore the relationship between language and culture, the relation between discourse pattern and linguistic proficiency, as well as the relation between language and thought. This study is expected to contribute to a better understanding of communication between Americans and Chinese.

CHAPTER II

LITERATURE REVIEW

This chapter is focused on previous studies that analyzed and compared language discourse patterns or structures between English and Chinese. There are three sections in the literature review. In section one, the literature review is focused on studies and works from Young, Tyler, and others. Those studies directly analyzed the discourse pattern of Chinese-English speakers, while Tyler's studies compared discourse patterns between native English and Chinese-English speakers as well.

In section two, studies conducted by Matalene, Scollons, and others are reviewed. Those studies analyzed principles and rhetorical arts that guide discourse patterns of Chinese and Asian speakers. The power of cultural values and historical continuity is suggested by those studies.

In section three, the reviewed studies were conducted on cross-language as well as language and thought related issues. Those studies analyzed language discourse structures from different viewpoints.

Section One: Cultural Differences and Linguistic Insufficiency in Discourse Studies and Works from Young, Tyler, and Others

In 1982 L. W. Young published her chapter, "Inscrutability Revisited", in the book, *Language and Social Identity*, (Ed. by J. Gumperz). In the chapter, Young described and analyzed data she collected in her studies on common discourse patterns in

Chinese, and proposed a Topic-Comment structure to explain a typical discourse pattern of Chinese-English speakers, which was considered as “not expected” by native English speakers. Young suggested that English-Chinese speakers have transferred the discourse structure they used in Chinese into English. She further attributed the format of the Topic-Comment structure to the traditional Chinese culture. In her later work, *Crosstalk and Culture in Sino-American Communication* (1994), she focused on how traditional Chinese culture influenced the language discourse of Chinese-English speakers and obstructed Sino-American communication. Young’s work (1982) had elicited critique studies from Tyler (Tyler et. al, 1988; Tyler and Bro, 1992).

Young and Others’ Studies on Chinese Discourse Patterns

The Conceptual Framework: A Topic-Comment Structure. In the chapter, “Inscrutability Revisited” (1982), Young introduced Topic-Comment sentence pattern, which was proposed by Y. R. Chao (1968) and elaborated by Chafe (1976) and Li & Thompson (1976).

The Topic-Comment structure is said to be organized by a relatively loose relationship between an initial topic and its comments (Chafe, 1976). The topic functions as a carrier of the old or well-known information, whereas a new or significant point will be developed by comments. Therefore, it is a structural format heavily loaded with contextualization cues (Chao, 1968; Young, 1982, 1994).

In the Topic-Comment structure, the subordinate or relative clauses are before the main clauses rather than immediately following the terms being defined, which is not

grammatically correct in English. Specific lexical markers in Chinese, such as “those, are equal to, which, that, the, a, and it,” become unnecessary in the Topic-Comment sentence type (Li & Thompson, 1976; Young, 1982).

Li & Thompson (1976) suggested that the Topic-Comment pattern is a basic type of sentence in Chinese, as well as in many other mainland South East Asian languages.

It was estimated that 50% of the sentences in Chinese belong to the topic-comment type (Chao, 1968). Young extended the format of Topic-Comment type from sentence to the discourse level. She suggested that since the Topic-Comment type is also a basic structural format at the discourse level in Chinese, it is readily transferred into English by the native Chinese speakers (Young, 1982, 1994).

Some recent research (Li, 1997) supported Young’s extended Topic-Comment model. Li in her doctoral research, *Second language acquisition of Topic-Comment structures in Mandarin Chinese*, suggested that in Chinese discourse, semantic and syntactic characteristics have combined together into a systematic categorization of Topic-Comment structures. Unlike English, Topic-Comment structures in Chinese often show ambiguous boundaries between grammaticality and appropriateness, and there are a large variety of such discourse structures. The Topic-Comment discourse structures in Chinese are not well matched to the discourse structures commonly used by native English speakers. Li suggested that the Topic-Comment discourse structure is the major difficulty to those native English-speakers who learn Chinese as a second language (Li, 1997).

Young's 'Board Meeting' Study. Young extended the Topic-Comment sentence model into discourse level. She has employed this model into her studies on Chinese-English discourse patterns, with data she collected from a variety of populations who had various careers, various education levels, and lived outside of China, such as in America and Hong Kong.

A part of the data Young analyzed in her work, "Inscrutability Revisited," was from a board meeting of a Hong Kong company. Young recorded the speeches in English from Chinese businessmen at the meeting. Young noticed that the communication in English went on smoothly at the board meeting. She analyzed and identified the structure of most of those speech events to the Topic-Comment pattern. Then, in another study, Young played the tape to native English speakers. She, however, found her subjects had difficulty in understanding those recorded speeches (1982).

Why did those non-native English speakers, in their business meeting, communicate smoothly in English, while her native English subjects had difficulty in understanding those same speeches? After interviewing her subjects, Young explained that because those spoken events were in an unfamiliar discourse pattern, the comprehensibility of spoken events to native English subjects was lowered. Young believed that her native English subjects were confused by an avalanche of relevant details presented before the proposed point. These listeners eventually got lost in such a Topic-Comment discourse pattern. She drew the conclusion that such discourse strategies are embedded in the traditional Chinese culture that emphasizes harmony and devalues confrontation in formal social relations (1982). The Topic-Comment discourse pattern, in

Chinese as well as being transferred into English, has had deep roots in the traditional Chinese culture (Young, 1982, 1994).

A Flaw in Young's Studies. It needs to be pointed out, however, that when Young played the tape to her native English subjects, the original contextual-cues might have been lost. In addition, her native English-speaking subjects could not share the same background issues, such as the inter-personal relations, cultural values, and cognitive strategies in discourse, as those businessmen had shared in Hong Kong. Those background issues might deliver more contextual cues than the literal meaning of words in those spoken events. The tape no longer carried the contextually shared information; which may have made the taped messages less comprehensible in a condition not equal to the original one.

An Important Implication. There is an important implication in Young's perspective of the transferred Chinese-English discourse structure. It indicates that a language discourse pattern may be an independent scheme in cognition. The cognitive strategies for selecting discourse pattern can be transferred from one language to another, and employed independently from the linguistic structures. Even though Young did not make an explicit point referring to the cognitive process in language discourse, she used the term, discourse-strategies. She has tried to provide an interpretation of the discourse pattern of Chinese-English speakers beyond simple linguistic principles.

Studies from Tyler and Others

Young's study triggered a series of studies from Tyler and others. Some re-analyzed Young's original data with respect to aspects of grammar and syntax in English. Some concluded that the Chinese-English discourse pattern, which has been considered unexpected by native English speakers, is not attributed to the Topic-Comment structure but to insufficient English proficiency of the Chinese-English speakers. For these authors, the assumption of cultural influence on language discourse pattern is denied.

Tyler (1988) presented her analysis in *Discourse structures and coherence in international teaching assistants' spoken discourse*. She disagreed with Young's perspective, that Chinese-English speakers tend to employ a Topic-Comment discourse structure, and instead argued that discourse structure is not responsible for the lower comprehensibility of discourse from non-native English speakers.

In 1992 in a further study, Tyler and Bro, 1992 re-analyzed a part of Young's original data from the spoken events of the 'board meeting' in Hong Kong. In the study, 4 speech excerpts were selected. Each was reconstructed into three written versions and then, the comprehensibility of all the original and reconstructed versions was rated by American undergraduate students who participated in an Introduction to Linguistics class in a southeastern university in the United States.

Tyler and Bro (1992) conducted a 4 * 4 factorial test in their study, which included 4 selected excerpts and each had 4 written versions: (a) Original Young, (b) Young with order of ideas reversed, (c) Reconstructed with original order, and (d) Reconstructed with order reversed. The subjects were 115 undergraduate students who

rated the comprehensibility of each version (from a to d) in each of the 4 excerpts.

According to Tyler & Bro, 15 subjects had invalid responses and their answers were eliminated from the final data. Please see Table 2.1 for the re-analyzed data and Table 2.2 for the results provided in Tyler and Bro's study (1992).

Table 2.1 Mean Comprehensibility Rating for Each Individual Excerpt and Version (Tyler and Bro, 1992)

Version	Excerpt			
	1	2	3	4
1. Original Young	3.39	1.78	3.07	3.06
2. Young with order of ideas reversed	3.07	1.97	2.63	3.04
3. Reconstructed with original order	2.21	1.47	2.00	2.07
4. Reconstructed with order reversed	2.23	1.71	1.69	2.13

Table 2.2 Analysis of Variance for Each of the Excerpt (Tyler and Bro, 1992)

	Excerpt			
	1	2	3	4
Condition	F = 31.63 P < .0001***	F = 3.34 P < 0.07	F = 24.81 P < .0001***	F = 22.79 P < .0001***
Order	F = 0.62 P < 0.43	F = 1.76 P < 0.19	F = 3.68 P < 0.06	F = 0.01 P < 0.82
Condition * Order	F = 0.87 P < 0.35	F = 0.04 P < 0.84	F = 0.11 P < 0.73	F = 0.05 P < 0.82

As can be seen from the above tables, Tyler and Bro have re-written Young's data from the board meeting in three ways: reversed the order of ideas only, a version reconstructed with grammatical changes, and a reconstructed version with the order of ideas reversed. As the results, Tyler and Bro found a significant effect ($p < .0001^{***}$) between the original version and reconstructed versions, no significant effect found on the factor of the order of ideas (1992). [Tyler and Bro also reported an interaction effect

($p < .02^*$) on Condition * Order, which is not evident in their given table.] Tyler and Bro, therefore, concluded that it is not the discourse pattern or the structure of the order of ideas, but grammatical and syntactical violations of using English that has caused the poor comprehensibility of the original versions that were produced by the Chinese-English-speakers. "The perception of the incoherence might better be understood as the cumulative result of interacting miscues at the discourse level, that is, miscues in syntactical incorporation, lexical discourse markers, tenses/aspect, and lexical specification" (Tyler and Bro, 1992, p. 71).

In another study, *discourse structure and the perception of incoherence in international teaching assistants' spoken language* (1992), Tyler did state that native English "listeners' interpretation of a discourse was determined not only by a speaker's pronunciation and grammar but also by discourse-level patterns of language use." (Tyler, 1992, p.713) However, in her studies, the "discourse-level patterns of language use" was only analyzed by English grammatical rules and related aspects. As a result, insufficient English proficiency has been treated as an aspect of discourse patterns or structures of non-native English speakers.

Flaws on the Study Design. Two flaws on the study design should be pointed out. First, Tyler and Bro had changed the original oral versions into written forms. Their subjects were no longer audience but readers. In general, spoken language is a relatively informal language when compared to written forms, and spoken language may depend more on contextual cues that contain both linguistic and nonlinguistic resources. A written form may eliminate the foreign accent of non-native English speakers; however,

the other important cues in spoken language may also be eliminated as well, such as the speaking manner, which is often conveyed by the voice and tone of the speaker. As pointed out before for Young's study, the information on background issues, with which those businessmen shared in Hong Kong, was also lost in Tyler and Bro's study. The written form carried even less contextual information than a tape.

The second arguable point on the study design is that it may be too simplified to illustrate the Topic-Comment discourse structure as a literal order that arranges given ideas. Such an understanding may not have met the description of the Topic-Comment discourse structure presented by Young (1982). Also the literally reversed-order of ideas may have changed the original logical relationship among given ideas in a rewritten version. In Tyler and Bro's study, there was no method and standard provided to prevent the logical connection of the reversed ideas from not being changed and remaining the same as that of the original version. Furthermore, the version that had literally reversed order was also a "reconstructed" version. With all the potential problems of introducing new factors.

Technical Flaws. There is also a technical flaw in Tyler and Bro's reconstructed written versions. Tyler & Bro may have changed the meanings conveyed by the corresponding original versions even though the comprehensibility of reconstructed versions may have been improved. Please see the following examples on Excerpt 4, Version (a), Young's original and (c), Reconstructed with original order, which were used as an example of the improvement of comprehensibility in Tyler and Bro' study (1992).

Chairman: Uh, Al do you think the new machinery that you just mentioned will cost us \$ 60,000 will cater for the...the new model, that is, the portable TV set that just mentioned by Jeff?

(4a). Young original

Al: I think this new machine will certainly reduce the production cost. And, uh, as we have an extra budget of about \$180,000 and we just spent about one third of the total amount buying this new machine and as sales of it increasing the production of hours, therefore I think it is very worthwhile at minimal to invest in this new machine by buying a \$60,000 new machine. I have also one thing to say. Because the personnel manager, he mentioned a few days ago that uh there are some difficulties in the equipping more new workers and ask the existing workers to work overtime by paying them some extra money, and therefore, I think that we have no alternative but to buy a new machine or otherwise incur a lot of cost by using the existing one.

(4c). Reconstruction with original ideas

Al: I think this new machine will certainly reduce the production cost. Ok, first, we have an extra budget about \$180,000 so we will just spend about one third of the total amount buying this new machine. Now remember, the sales of the new TV model will increase production hours, therefore I think it is very worthwhile at minimal to invest this portable TV model by buying the \$60,000 new machine. I have other thing to say. The personnel manager, he mentioned a few days ago, that uh there are some financial difficulties both in equipping more new workers and asking the existing workers to work over time and so paying them some extra money. Given these reasons, I think that we have no alternative but to buy the new machine or otherwise incur a lot of labor cost by using the existing one.

According to Tyler and Bro, the above two versions were rated by a scale of 1 to 5, from the level "easy to follow" to "quite difficult to follow". The mean score on the Original Young version (4a), was 3.06, as compared with 2.07 on the Reconstructed version with original order (4c). However, the scale was designed only to measure the "comprehensibility" of a version without consideration of whether or not the same meanings or ideas would be equally conveyed by the reconstructed version as did by the original version. Above reconstructed version, (4c) may have changed the original messages delivered by AL' s original speech, even though a better comprehensibility has been achieved by the reconstruction.

In the reconstructed version, Tyler and Bro clearly made Al's argument focused on the point of saving money for his budget request; while Al's original speech might in fact contain two considerations other than only one point, saving money AND maintaining the existed harmonious relationship between the workers and the administration. Technically, Al's two-point spoken discourse has been reconstructed into a one-point written version. From a different discourse standard or perspective, Tyler and Bro reconstructed Al's second point subordinated to the first point of saving money. This technical flaw may have changed the original meanings even though the comprehensibility has been improved in the reconstructed version.

Contrasting Discourse Strategies between Western and Eastern Cultures

Contrasting discourse strategies between western and eastern cultures may have reflected the different cultural values held between western and eastern nations. From the point of view of cultural differences, Al's second concern on the inter-personal relationship may be perceived as equally important to, if not more important than that of saving money in support of his budget request in Chinese culture.

Comparing the above reconstructed-version, (4c), to the original spoken event, (4a), the change in Al's spoken manner was also detectable. The phrases and words, such as "*Ok, first*", "*Now also remember*", "*so*", and so forth, were added into the reconstruction version as better discourse cues. These words and phrases made Al's speech eloquent, straightforward, and even assertive, if not aggressive. However, the speaker, Al, might be able to use such phrases and words in his request, but might not

because of unwillingness, since “Chinese tend to minimize confrontation in formal social relationships.” (Young, 1982, p. 80)

When the two versions were compared, native English speakers may have first perceived that the reconstructed version is clearer and easier to understand than that of the original one, while native Chinese speakers may have immediately perceived that Al’s speaking manner has been largely changed in the reconstructed version.

According to Young, who had conducted interviews with those businessmen after that board meeting, a straightforward speaking manner, even for the budget request, would be considered being rude, immodest, demanding, and aggressive (Young, 1982, p.80-81). “Chinese tend to minimize confrontation in formal social relationships. The native English speakers called attention to the indirectness of the discourse.” And they “commented that the Chinese arguments lacked sufficient aggressive and persuasive power.” (Young, 1982, p. 80)

Section Two: Cultural Differences, Studies from Matalene, the Scollons and Others

The Studies from Matalene and Others

Matalene was an American writing teacher before she went to Mainland China to teach English to undergraduate students in a northwest university in the early 1980s. In her study, “Contrastive Rhetoric: An American Writing Teacher in China” (1985), she specifically discussed the contrasting rhetorical arts held between Americans and

Chinese, and how the differently valued rhetorics led to conflict in her English writing class. The unique teaching experience has led Matalene to conclude that the contrasting rhetorical differences actually reflected the contrasting cultural values between Western and Chinese cultures. She believed that the highly valued rhetorical arts or discourse approaches in a western society, such as in the United States are

“profoundly affected by the fact that we are post-Romantic Westerners, teaching and writing in the humanities. As such, we value originality and individuality, what we called the 'Authentic Voice.' ... We strongly favor Pound's dictum ' Make it new ', and we insist that our students use their own words in their own unique ways. We allow that original writing involves a chaotic discovery process but require that finished texts be cohesive, coherent, and explicitly unified... But Western rhetoric is only Western. As we commit ourselves to reinventing our own rhetorical tradition, we need to understand the limits as well as the virtues of that tradition.” (p. 790)

Contrasting Emphasis in Rhetorical Arts. Matalene believed that memorization has played the central role in Chinese rhetorical art; while the memory was only the fourth art of rhetoric and often ignored in English classrooms. From her unique angle of observation, Matalene pointed out that

“Ultimately, the Chinese memorize not just the characters of their beautiful and difficult written language; they memorize the culture itself.” (1985, p. 790).
“Certainly, all language-users rely upon idioms, cliches, and set phrases, but Chinese seem always to rely upon them.” (p. 793)

“In trying to understand the linguistic and rhetorical differences that inform Chinese discourse, we need not search for ultimate causes. Invention, arrangement, style, memory, and delivery can all be defined, practiced and valued in ways other than our own... To achieve social harmony and to express the view of group by referring to tradition and relying on accepted patterns of expression were the central purposes and practices of Chinese rhetoric.” (p. 795)

She noticed that even in primary school, Chinese children begin to memorize the set phrases drawn from Chinese classic sources. The same practice is also found in other cultural aspects. She pointed out, for example, that students of *tai-qi* are expected to

practice the eighty-five forms for the rest of their lives, and that the art of Chinese calligraphy requires “extraordinary feats of memorization” and practice on handwriting as well.

Matalene found herself “programmed to respond with her own ready-made remarks: ‘Be original,’ ‘Use new language,’ ‘Avoid cliches,’” (p.792) to the sets of fixed phrases by the students in her English writing class.

On the other hand, her Chinese students tried to tell her, very politely and indirectly, that they had such a rich repertoire of classical Chinese literature needed to learn, and Chinese set phrases and proverbs were so expressive in meaning, which could only make a composition more vivid and beautiful. While “in English, because of the limit of our non-native speakers’ vocabulary, it’s very hard to write a real beautiful and vivid essay.” (Matalene, 1985, p. 793)

Matalene believed that she was actually challenged by the traditional Chinese culture, which has stood behind the Chinese language discourse:

“In China, the hierarchy of culture, language, and rhetoric has a powerful coherence or internal logic, and because this hierarchy is so different from our own, Chinese culture often appears seamless, mysterious, and impenetrable.” (p. 790) “To understand these rhetorical values, so different from our own, it is necessary to refer to some of the fundamental principles of the culture which contains them.” (1985, p. 794)

She concluded that in the Chinese culture, if there is any innovation or creation, it happens within the existing formal traditions. The arts of rhetoric in Chinese discourse have been based on one’s memory bank of the Chinese classical literature:

“... for the Chinese writer, style means manipulating one’s memory bank of phrases, arrangement means filling the forms, and invention means doing it the way is

has been done. Each of these three arts of rhetoric depends profoundly on the fourth, memory.” (1985, p 794)

Indirectness in Chinese Discourse. An indirect discourse approach is often a salient impression to the westerners engaged in a communication with the native Chinese speakers (Matalene, 1985; Smith, 1895; Creel; 1953; Young, 1982; Sullivan, 1990). In Matalene’s words:

“To be indirect in both spoken and written discourse, to expect the audience to infer meanings rather than to have them spelled out is a defining characteristic of Chinese rhetoric and one that like the emphasis on memorization is consistent with the nature of the language. The Chinese written language is ideographic, pictorial, concrete; from the characters on the page the reader must synthesize, infer, and ‘create the text’.” (p. 801)

Matalene particularly noticed that in written Chinese, the structure of the final paragraph is somehow unusual to westerners:

“It sums up, recapitulates, offers an explanation, suggests alternatives, generalizes, and exhorts, The connections between the sentences are not explicitly signaled but are almost all left up to the reader.” (p. 801)

To westerners, the indirectness of Chinese discourse may be not only perceived from daily spoken language and essays but also from political and public events, such as in newspapers. Matalene wrote,

“Certainly, when in 1966 the newspapers reported that Chairman Mao had gone swimming, every Chinese knew that exercise was not the issue; Mao had quelled the factions, taken charge, and was about to launch the Cultural Revolution. That so much could be conveyed clearly and unmistakably to so many by one swim is hard for us to grasp. To the Chinese, it was perfectly clear.

The Chinese practice of social indirection is even harder for us to understand given our natural behavior mode of making direct requests, offering direct responses, and generally making our thoughts and feelings known. We are constantly seen by the Chinese as rude, aggressive, and ill-mannered. Just as a poem requires interpretation,

so does a gesture or a statement; therefore, it need not and should not be explicit. One can assume that one's audience will get the point – unless, of course, they are barbarians.” (p. 802)

Historical Continuity. An American missionary, Arthur Smith who lived in China for 22 years, stated a similar perspective. In his book, “Chinese Characteristics” (1894), Smith wrote:

“One of the intellectual habits upon which we Anglo-Saxons pride ourselves most is that of going directly to the marrow of a subject, and when we have reached it saying exactly what we mean. Considerably abatements must no doubt be made in any claim set up for such a habit, when we consider the usages of polite society and those of diplomacy, yet it still remains substantially true that instinct of rectilinearity is the governing one, albeit considerably modified by special circumstances. No very long acquaintance is required with any Asiatic race, however, to satisfy us that their instincts and ours are by no means the same – in fact, they are in opposite poles.” (p. 65)

“Firmly are we persuaded that the individual who can peruse a copy of the *Peking Gazette* and, while reading each document, can form an approximately correct notion so to what is really behind it, knows more of China can be learned from all the works on this Empire that were ever written.” (p. 73)

The indirect approach is suggested as an essential social strategy in the Chinese culture, and the indirect approach in language discourse is only one aspect of the social affairs. In Chinese society, an indirect discourse is not an individual case. It is accepted by all Chinese and has been fostered by Chinese culture and history (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985).

Some pointed out that the indirect strategy has not only been found in Chinese, but also in many Asian languages. The indirectness is concerned as both a form of politeness, where Asians avoid expressing themselves explicitly, and a speech art, which has an inherent pragmatic role (Sew, 1997). Practically, indirect discourse strategies are used in any language, including in English. The matter is the difference of degrees.

Discourse strategies are ways of perceiving and conceptualizing via language, which are suggested as purely culture-specific (Feng, 1998).

From the viewpoint of individual development, indirect discourse strategies may be internalized in the social-psychological development of Chinese or Asian children since they have started to learn their native language. High maintenance of the discourse strategies of one's native language, it is suggested, are closely related to the individual's developmental period before young adulthood (Zeng, 1997).

A Transferred Discourse Pattern from Chinese to English. Matalene did notice that her Chinese students use different discourse structures from that of her American students in English. On this point, she held the same perspective as Young did. She believed that her Chinese students have transferred their discourse patterns from Chinese into English. On the other hand, she attributed the linguistic mistakes, such as lacking of lexical markers and other linguistic devices, to grammatical problems and insufficient English proficiencies of her students other than to aspects of the discourse patterns.

Cultural Differences: Individualism vs. Collectivism. It is believed that because of the collective culture in Chinese history and reality, Chinese tend to use similar discourse approaches in their social communication. Because of valued collective culture, the Chinese language has amazingly remained relatively stable for about three thousands years (Young, 1994; Creel, 1953; Matalene, 1985; Ropp, 1990), including its syntax and discourse pattern. This stability may provide an explanation for the fact that Matalene's

students, in English major, were capable of reading, quoting and translating Chinese classical works written as early as 250 B. C. (Matalene, 1985).

In contrast, an authentic voice and innovatory style of discourse has been encouraged by the Aristotelian tradition in western individualism culture. Might it be a reason that English has been changed dramatically during only 4 to 6 centuries? Now American college students, even English majors, have difficulty in reading *Canterbury Tales*, written by Chaucer about 600 hundreds years ago, or *Hamlet* or *Macbeth* by Shakespeare just about four hundreds years ago.

Matalene tried to use memorization to explain the maintenance of the Chinese culture, language, rhetorical arts, and indirect discourse structures. However, it seems not very convincing, since memorization is an individual's cognitive achievement that has come with the individual's choice. How could all Chinese chose to have gone through such hard memorization generation by generation for over thousands of years? Memorization may have been emphasized in childhood learning in Chinese traditions; however, language acquisition and socialization in childhood development may not require extra effort of memorization for a Chinese child. While Western parents and teachers foster their children to continue the Aristotelian tradition, Chinese adults have educated their youths to value and maintain their own brilliant cultural-heritage.

Supports from Other Researchers. Except memorization, Matalene's perspective was supported by the study conducted by A. Brooks (1997). From the viewpoint of teaching English to Chinese as a second language, Brooks also put the focus on Chinese cultural system. Brooks explicitly stated that the Chinese cultural system is not based on

the strength of the individual, but on the pattern of relationship maintained by all people. As a technique in communication, the Chinese put emphasis on the receiver of messages rather than on the sender. This cultural trait, derived from Confucianism, is found to have significant impact on the strategies native Chinese speakers use to learn English when they are taught by methods based on the philosophies of western philosophers (Brooks, 1997). Therefore, it is of practical importance to teachers, who teach English to Chinese as a second language, to understand how Chinese learning styles and expectations reflect Chinese culture and history (Brooks, 1997).

Inagaki (1997) conducted a study to investigate the acquisition of the dative alternation in English among adult learners. The subjects were native speakers of English, Japanese and Chinese adults. The results of Inagaki's study suggested that in that learning process, native Japanese and Chinese speakers were governed by the rules and relevant structures of their native languages. For example, in providing temporal information, native Japanese and Chinese speakers often deliver a temporal message at the beginning or a salient position of a sentence or expression instead of using tense, as well as a temporal term at a later part of the sentence. Similarly, a Japanese researcher, Yumada (1997) suggested that language discourse is like a game, in which native English speakers and non-English speakers such as Japanese follow different discourse conventions and rules. Habitually, the different game rules in language discourse often bring obstacles to the communication between Americans and Japanese. Messages, from detail information to some key issue, are often misunderstood between the two sides of the communication even on business issues (Yumada, 1997).

Studies from the Scollons and Others

Ron Scollon and Susanne Wong-Scollon (1991) conducted research on the discourse pattern in spoken English between Westerners and Asians. The study was based on their teaching experience in Taiwan and Korea, as well as on the data they collected from Tokyo.

In the article, *Topic confusion in English-Asian Discourse*, Scollons stated that speakers of Chinese, Korean, and Japanese tend to provide an inductively, or delayed introduction of topics, which often leads Westerners into a confusion about what the topic would be in Asians' discourse (p. 113).

An "Opening Topic" vs. a "Facework". The Scollons' research focused on the call-answer conversational sequence between Westerners and Asians. They described that the Westerners prefer the "call-answer-topic" sequence in a conversation, such as a phone and visit. That is, for example in a call, first, the caller starts the call, secondly the answer responds to the phone, and then, the caller raises the topic or purpose of the call as the third step. In the "call-answer-topic" sequence, the main topic is often expected from the caller immediately after a brief greeting is exchanged.

However, the Asian call-answer pattern is found different in the third step from that of the Western call-answer pattern. It is described as a sequence of "call-answer-facework (topic)". In such a sequence, instead of making the main topic after the brief greeting, Asian callers often start a considerable relevant or background information, which the Scollons named as "Facework". An Asian facework is often "A chained series

of lesser, non-binding topics... not for their own importance, but as hints or as preparation for the conclusion in the main topic at the end.” (1991, p. 116)

The “topic” in “call-answer-facework (topic)” sequence is put within a pair of parentheses because the true topic might not be actually stated out. According to the Scollons, it is more than often that the unstated topic has been correctly understood through a facework of well-organized hints when the conversation was between Asians. It may not be a surprise if confusion happens in the communication between the westerners and Asians who do not have the knowledge of such different discourse patterns (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991).

Confusion between Westerners and Asians. Because most communication between Asians and westerners takes place in English, one may mistakenly believe that little translation work is required for East and West to understand each other (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991). In a conversation, westerners may generally assume that the first thing said by the Asians is the main topic, but they soon get confused in the Asian facework. When the main point is given later at the end of the Asian pattern, the westerners may mistakenly perceive it as a second point and be frustrated by having received no further supportive details of it (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991).

On the other hand, researchers (Young, 1982,1994; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Scollon & Scollon, 1994, 1995) have suggested that Asian tend to not pay attention to the beginning of a statement but to pay “somewhat more acute attention later on as the conversation reaches its conclusion.” (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991, p. 116) Receiving no late point from westerners may also frustrate Asians.

Like Young, Scollons attributed these different calling-answering patterns between Westerners and Asians to different cultural values. They stated that

The "sequence of call-answer-topic is so fixed, not because it is logical, but because it is learned, cultural behaviors. It is fixed in our behavior, perhaps, but not fixed universally for all humans in any inevitable logic of conversation." (p. 114)

Related Asian Cultural Issues. In westerner-Asian communication, Asians might often either pay little attention to the main point or purpose at the beginning of the conversation, or feel the westerners were impolite, aggressive, pushy or even rude with a straightforward statement. Particularly when the conversation was related to a request or demand (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Young, 1982, 1994; Creel, 1953). Scollons found that the discourse pattern is a far more complex issue in Asian cultures than the simple format, "call-answer-facework (topic)".

In their studies, the Scollons presented their preliminary research results, the models of "call-answer-topic" vs. "call-answer-facework (topic)", to the Chinese in Taiwan. However, they have received opposed responses. The Scollons found that in the Chinese culture, not only the sequence of a conversation, but also individuals' social status in a particular hierarchy system, may decide who would be the right person proposing the topic in the particular conversation.

"In this set of responses we had found that for Chinese not only was it important to consider the sequence between the first speaker and the topic but that, more importantly, we had to consider cultural conditions on how the first speaker is chosen. And in the chosen of the first speaker the most important single dimension is the relative vertical social distance between the two parties." (p. 117)

The person who is "in the lower position and by the virtue of that lower position he or she could rarely have the face to introduce a topic at all." (p. 117). One's position in

a conversation may not be decided merely by one's social status. Age also serves as a very important measure in Asian conversations (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991).

“Vertical social relations may be fairly said to be the core of Confucian thought. In virtually any imaginable pair of speakers, one is thought to be higher, however slightly, and the other lower by the same degree. When Chinese, Koreans, or Japanese meet they are quick to establish the governing social relationship by asking one's position and especially one's age.” (p.117)

On the other hand, without bearing the similar cultural experience, it may be very hard for westerners to accept the perspective that cultural factors would have such a powerful influence to Asians' discourse pattern. In a western society, one's age may be considered no relation at all to one's discourse pattern; and being asked for age is definitely too rude and may intrude one's privacy.

Westerners and Asians need to understand more about each other's culture to reach better communication. The relationship between language and culture may deserve more attention than before in the cross-language studies (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991, 1995; Hatch, 1992).

When only the grammar and linguistic measures of one language have been used as universal criteria on cross-language studies, it may be likely to have biased results that block our eyes (Hatch 1992; Gumperz, 1982, 1994; Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Pye, 1984; Hall, 1977).

Section Three: Relevant Studies on Language between English and Chinese

Psycho-Linguistic Related Studies on English and Chinese

Mental Lexicons of Second Language Learners. O’Gorman (1996) conducted a study to investigate the organization and development of second language lexicon. The subjects were 22 Hong Kong teachers, native Chinese speakers who had mid-level of English proficiency. The results suggested that the L1 (Chinese) and L2 (English) lexicon of the group were very different in memory structures.

The test material was a single list of 20 frequent and common words, which was shown in forms of both Chinese and English. Subjects heard the list of words first in English, and then in Chinese. They were asked to write the first word that entered their minds immediately after they heard a word in either of two languages.

In two languages, the lexicon of responded words were analyzed for frequencies, and results were compared to determine which similar semantic prompts inspired different associated words.

O’Gorman found that subjects produced very different structures of responses in their L1 (Chinese) and L2 (English) lexicons, of which responses evoked by L1 prompt words are different from that evoked by L2 prompts in both word frequencies and semantic associations, such as a synonym or antonym vs. an extended-meaning. Furthermore, individual word responses did not elicit similar frequencies of word types, such as noun to noun vs. noun to verb or adjective in L1 and L2. O’Gorman concluded that different language seems to produce different storage and retrieval systems. She has

challenged the notion of a common underlying principle of linguistic proficiency of bilingual speakers.

Myers' study (1996) is focused on different conceptions that may be referred to a same word or term between native English and native Chinese speakers. Myers tried to find out how those different conceptions could result in misunderstandings between two populations. For example, the English word "private" is translated into "si" in Chinese, which means private, selfish, and illegal (Myers, 1996). Myers believed that such Chinese words are not only polysemous, but also reflect the Chinese culture and world views, such as on individualism, privacy, and collectivism.

Syntactic Structures' Influence on Logical Reasoning Strategies. Some researchers have assumed that syntactical structures of language may influence one's logical reasoning strategies. In one study (Sun, 1998), logical reasoning strategies were compared between two groups of children in Taiwan and the US. The research was based on Slobin's theory (1984) that in language acquisition, a child comes to adopt a particular framework for schematizing experience, which in turn affects the child's logical strategies. Sun proposed that the syntactic structure of relative clauses in Chinese might form a part-to-whole logical framework to Chinese children, while English relative clauses might form a whole-to-part logical structure to American children. A total of 80 children in two groups participated in three tasks: relative clause comprehension, verbal logical task and non-verbal logical task. Results indicated that children in both language groups are able to perform all three tasks but at different speeds and in different manners. The reasoning patterns of the children are different between the two groups. According to

Sun, the children in Taiwan tended to notice internal details (parts) of stimulating figures first, while American children tended to notice the overall (whole) pattern first (Sun, 1998). However, there has been no evidence provided on the causal relation between syntactical structures of relative clauses in a language and a child's logical reasoning operation in Sun's study.

Differences in Reading Comprehension. A study was conducted by Chiao (1997) to examine the reading strategies used in English and Chinese. The reading task included three passages, two in Chinese, classical and modern Chinese, respectively, while the other in English. Each passage was presented by two writing styles: text only and text accompanied by phonetic symbols. Four Taiwanese students participated in the reading task. The subjects were interviewed previously for their reading strategies. The subjects' reading comprehension was measured by the number of discourse cues that was missed during the reading and retelling scores. Results suggested that subjects' reading comprehension was influenced by languages as well as by writing style even when the same reading strategies have been employed. Particularly, the results indicated that the both styles have less influence on the subjects' reading comprehension in two Chinese systems, classical and modern Chinese than to that in English. It was suggested that the native Chinese-speaking subjects tend to employ the same reading strategies in both their native and non-native languages. The same reading strategies, however, may not work equally well in their comprehending the given discourse structures between English and Chinese (Chiao, 1997).

Concept Acquisition between Native English and Chinese Children. Xu (1998)

conducted a study on factors involved in the acquisition of word concepts in English between native English and Chinese speaking children in the US. In the study, Xu focused on the children's acquisition of word concepts that refer to performance-based and relative word knowledge (Xu, 1998). Six kindergarten children participated in a six-month study period. The teacher and parents were interviewed as well. Xu found that all children have shared similar developmental pattern in their acquisition of the word concepts in English. However, a distinct difference has been found between native English and native Chinese speaking children in the difficulty levels of their memorization in English. For example, a significant difference was found in memorizing lines of a nursery rhyme between the native English and native Chinese speaking children. Among the native Chinese speaking children, those who have less experience or more limited in Chinese literacy have been found little impact on their acquisition of the word concepts in English. The result suggested that, even in early childhood, the previous experience in Chinese might have had impact to a child on his/her development of word concepts in English. Xu (1998) also pointed out that a child's home environment and school literacy support were the two major factors that have had strong influence to those Chinese-speaking children in their acquisition of the word concepts in English (Xu, 1998).

Discourse Comprehension. McKoon & Ratcliff (1992) proposed a theoretical

view that discourse comprehension is a cognitive process of inferring and generating the connections in language communication. This mental process is conducted in a context

and based on schemas that contain individuals' experience and knowledge on a particular text information, as well as on the knowledge of the world (McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992). Their assumption is that the reader or listener acts as an active agent in discourse comprehension rather than a passive receiver. The challenge to the reader or listener is to specify the subset connections from a variety of possible inferences and to build up the global coherence in a task of language discourse (McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992).

The mechanism and algorithm of cognitive connections have been analyzed in discourse comprehension in English. Individuals' knowledge of the world is believed to be the basis for guiding the inferential connections in a reading process (McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992).

On the algorithm of cognitive connections, McKoon & Ratcliff propose two models, a minimalist position and constructivist position. A minimalist position, in normal readings, refers to the cognitive connections of the only inferences made automatically and required to establish local coherence, (e.g. sentence-to-sentence), and those lexical-level inferences that are based on well-known knowledge (e.g. the relation between "the dog" and "the collie", or "sweep floor" and "broom"). A reader may make other elaborated inferences and establish global coherence only under special circumstances, such as a result of special goal-directed strategies (McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992).

In contrast, in a constructivist position, elaborate inferences are routinely constructed instantly to a detailed representation of the situation or to link disparate parts of the text, such as a global coherence (McKoon & Ratcliff, 1992).

Narration in Cross-Language Studies

Narration is considered to be the most universal pattern in discourse, because all cultures have storytelling tradition. However, some researcher has found that stories translated from other languages into English are often very difficult to understand and recall by native-English speakers (Hatch, 1992). Such a fact leads people to question whether a universal structure of narratives exists, and what might be the causal factors behind the discourse pattern of narratives. The unshared cultural experiences are believed to be a reason for the difficulty that the native English-speakers have had in their understanding and recalling a translated story (Hatch, 1992). It is suggested that language itself may be incapable of doing all the work for one's discourse comprehension even if the discourse is represented perfectly in syntax (Hatch, 1992; Hasan & Fries, 1995; Murray & others, 1993). Many have pointed out that it is difficult to separate linguistic, cultural, and cognitive factors in a discourse since these factors are tightly interwoven (Hasan & Fries, 1995; Hori, 1995; Hatch, 1992; Berkenkotter & Huckin, 1995; Bloom and others, 1997).

Summary

Language discourse pattern may provide a unique angle to understand miscommunication between westerners and easterners, as well as the relationship

between language and thought, language and cultural, and individuals' cognitive development and socialization. As many researchers have noticed, language discourse pattern is a form of cognitive strategy that organizes an individual's ideas in a language expression. Researchers, such as Young, Matalene, the Scollons, Hatch, and many others, believe that discourse patterns in different cultures heavily bear the cultural values that have been socialized as a part of the individuals' social-cognitive development. In other words, a language discourse pattern, deductive, or inductive, direct or indirect, for instance, is not merely a linguistic device. It is the cognitive strategy that may be more likely formed under the influence of certain values, such as culture, education, and social interaction, to meet certain social and cultural emphases in a particular community or society. Though linguistic properties, such as grammar, syntax, and lexes facilitate language organizations, the employed discourse pattern may lead to a variety of language expressions as the results that convey the same thoughts.

From this point of view, a discourse pattern may be as independent as language and play a key role between thoughts and the language expression. Language is a tool to express thoughts, while discourse pattern may be a method of how to use the language tool to express the thoughts. Language expresses thoughts but is not the exact thoughts. While a discourse pattern structures the thoughts in the language expression, it is not the exact way of one's thinking. In the relationship of thought – discourse pattern – language expression, discourse pattern may have an independent, as well as an indelible cognitive-function between one's thoughts and the corresponding language expression.

CHAPTER III

METHODOLOGY

Research Design

A comparison and qualitative analysis on certain discourse features in written English between native English and Chinese-English speakers has been conducted in this study. Two groups of subjects were selected from a population of advanced graduate students with high English language proficiency. A free writing task in response to stimulus materials was used to generate the dependent measure.

The perspectives held by Tyler and Bro (1992) and Young (1982, 1994), as well as Matalene (1985), have been investigated, respectively. The perspective from Tyler and Bro suggested that the failure of providing explicit discourse cues, namely, the lexical markers and syntactical devices, is a significant factor that leads the Chinese-English users into an unexpected discourse in written English (Tyler and Bro, 1992).

Young (1982, 1994) and Matalene (1985) pointed out that the Chinese-English users prefer an indirect approach in language expression, while native English-speakers value and prefer a direct approach. They believed that it is the indirect approach that has led the Chinese-English students into an unexpected discourse pattern when they are in an environment where western culture is dominant (Matalene, 1985). Specifically, Young pointed out that the Chinese-English speakers tend to provide an important message or point in the late part of the discourse. Young believed that this indirect pattern is closely related to the goal of harmony in the Chinese culture, in which, aggression and

confrontation is avoided and modesty and a reserved manner is highly valued (1982, 1994). The use of students with high English language proficiency was intended to minimize the contamination of linguistic errors.

There are three key components in this study design, the projective materials, the criteria for controlling the English proficiency of the Chinese-English subjects, and the six structural features of discourse. The description and rationale for each of these three components are described in the sections after that of the research hypothesis.

Research Hypothesis

In this study, it was hypothesized that the selection of a discourse pattern can be an independent cognitive factor in a linguistic event. The different discourse patterns between Native English and Chinese-English speakers may be the results of preferred different cognitive strategies held by the two populations, respectively. It hypothesized that native English subjects may prefer a direct discourse approach, while the Chinese-English speakers may prefer an indirect approach in structuring their discourse in written English. Particular structural features in their written samples might have reflected the different discourse strategies, such as narrative or descriptive presentation, beginning with a main point or with background information, straightforward direct expression vs. indirect expression, the addition of a second point or thought given at a late part of the writing, and so forth. If these discourse features are found to significantly differ between the two groups, then the preferred indirect approach of Chinese-English speakers may form an unexpected pattern in discourse, from the perspective of native English speakers.

The different discourse patterns between native English and Chinese speakers may reflect different cognitive strategies preferred between the two populations in their social activities.

The linguistic properties, either of English or of Chinese, may have no significant influence on how an individual chose to structure a discourse. Poor English proficiency may be the significant effect for a variety of inappropriate discourses among individuals who use English as a second language. However, English proficiency, good or poor, may not be responsible for a consistent discourse pattern found in a population who uses English as a second language.

Subject

Selection of Subjects

The subjects of both Chinese and American groups were selected from graduate students of two major US universities by following the designed research criteria. All subjects were informed of the general purpose of this study and asked for their voluntary participation. Please see Appendix A, the Informed Consent Form.

Criteria for Controlling the Language Proficiency of Chinese Subjects. It was important to control both the English proficiency and the Chinese language maturity of the Chinese-English subjects. Three standards were set for controlling such language proficiency of Chinese-English subjects. In the selection of Chinese-English subjects, the

base point of an acceptable level of English proficiency was decided by a score 550 in the TOEFL. TOEFL 550 is an accepted score by most major universities in the US as an indicator of English proficiency of a non-native English speaker who wants to register as a graduate student in the US. The maturity of Chinese language was decided by the age 16 or older when the subjects left China for the first time to come to the United States. In addition, at least a 5-year living experience in the US was required for reducing the discrepancy between one's TOEFL score and actual performance in English.

Recruiting Chinese-English Subjects. All the Chinese subjects were found in Convenience & Voluntary approach (Rosenthal & Rosnow, 1975; Borg & Gall, 1989). Other foreign students who were from Thai, Korea and so forth first introduced several Chinese students. Then some of the Chinese graduate students introduced some others.

Recruiting Native-English Subjects. The Native-English subjects were American graduate student volunteers and were found in two ways. One way was similar to the way above for finding the Chinese-English subjects. The other was to recruit subjects in a Graduate Lounge on the Campus Center of a university. In the second approach, the researcher sat at the entry of the Graduate Lounge and asked each incoming individual, who might be a valid subject, "Are you a graduate student?" If the answer was positive, the individual was asked whether she or he was willing to be a subject. Seven individuals were recruited in this approach. Four of the seven met the designed criteria. Two of the remaining three individuals spoke German as their native language. The other was ruled out because s/he wrote only two lines with less than 30 words.

Profile of the Subjects. The subjects of both groups were selected by following the designed standards of recruitment. Table 3.1 provides a profile of the final subjects of both the Native-English and Chinese-English groups.

Table 3.1 The Profile of the Native-English and Chinese-English Subjects

Group		Chinese-English	Native-English	Total
Size of Each Group		9	9	18
Sex	Male	4	4	8
	Female	5	5	10
Major	Social Sciences	5	5	10
	Natural	4	4	8
Language	First	Chinese	English	
	Second	English	N/A	
Age Rang	21 – 25	1	2	3
	26 – 30	2	3	5
	31 – 35	2	1	3
	36 – Above	4	3	7
TOEFL Score	570 – 599	3	N/A	3
	600 –Above	6		6
The First Time	Before Sep.	7	N/A	7
	Before Sep.	2		2

As can be seen in Table 3.1, two groups of subjects were matched in size. Each group had 5 graduate students in the fields of social science or education, and 4 in that of natural or physical sciences. Each group had 5 females and 4 males. The English proficiency of subjects in the Chinese-English group was well above the criteria for selection. Two-thirds or, 6 of them had a TOEFL score above 600, while the other three had scores between 570 and 599. All Chinese subjects were older than 16 when they first left China to come to the US. In addition, all of them had more than a 5-year period in which they used English as their daily language in the US.

Individual Information. An information sheet was given to each potential subject for the necessary individual information. With no request for the name, 6 questions were asked for Chinese-English graduate students while 4 questions were asked for American graduate students. The questions for the Chinese-English subjects included Sex, Age Range, Academic Field, Native Language, the Time (the year & month) they first came to the US, and their highest TOEFL score. (Please see Appendix C, for the Information Sheet.) The American graduate students were not asked the last two questions.

Stimulus Material

The stimulus material was a series of six pictures that have the images of two young children, a girl and a boy, and a family dog. Those pictures were cut from videotape of a white American family with the permission of the parents of the children. The pictures represent activities of the children inside of their house. The girl was about 3 ½ years old and the boy was about 1 ½ years old when the tape was recorded.

The same stimulus material was given to all subjects in the form of a projective test. All subjects were asked to produce one or two paragraphs in written English as the response to the series of pictures. All subjects were asked to give a title to their own writing.

The series of pictures was designed to have a fixed order, but contained no language. There was no clear structural hint between the previous and next picture in the sequence of pictures. The purpose of such a design was to let subjects have as much latitude as possible to produce their own meaning and structure for the written task.

Data Collection

Type of the Data

The data, the samples in written English, were collected in two ways: The controlled written samples from all subjects, as well as a referential sample from each Chinese-English subject only as a reference to their English proficiency. The referential sample consisted of a written piece in English, no longer than 2 pages, that normally was an excerpt of any assignment or final paper that was written previously for their academic work.

Controlled Written Samples. Those written samples were the responses to the series of given pictures from the common stimulus material and common procedure. All such written samples were collected in individual settings. There were 9 valid written samples collected from each group, with 18 written-samples as the total.

Referential Sample. The second source of data was required only for the Chinese-English subjects. In the original research design, a sample of the second source of data might be necessary if the controlled written sample of the Chinese-English subject contained numerous grammatical mistakes. Under such a circumstance, the referential data might be useful for the judgement of whether or not other factors were involved, such as a different stress level in the test, lacking editing facilities, and so forth. Since

there were few grammatical errors in the controlled samples and a wide variability of referential samples, they were not analyzed in the study.

Procedure of Data Collection

In the data collection, appointments were arranged by phone for all the subjects, except those whom the researcher found in the Graduate Lounge. All the written samples were collected individually in a similar structured session on campus.

Instruction of the Test. In the testing, all the subjects were given the same printed instruction, the series of pictures, blank paper, and a pen. All the subjects were required to read the instructions first, which states, "Please write a paragraph or two in response to the series of 6 pictures. As you will, it can be a story or any type of writing. Please give a title to your written product. Take as much time as you need. Dictionaries are allowed. Thank you again for your time and participation."

The instruction contained two requests: a written response to the set of given pictures with a title and the written response in a story or any type of writing. These two requests asked subjects to make their own choice. The term "story" was an ambiguous hint, which, however, was actually the designed measure for the first structural feature of discourse, the Writing Type, in this study.

Even though subjects were allowed to take as much time as they need, the testing time was recorded by the researcher for each subject. The testing time began when the subject started to examine the pictures after asking all questions. The time ended when

the subject submitted her/his writing. A few subjects were asked to give a title for their writings after the written responses were submitted. The time for adding the title was not counted. The recorded time was used in the measure of average written speed between the subjects of two groups.

Questions and Answers on the Written Response. As expected, questions were often raised from subjects of both groups after the subject read the instruction. The most two common questions were, "What do you want me to write?" and "How long do you want?" The standard answers, for the question similar to the first one was, "Whatever you like to write." While for the question similar to the second one was, "It's up to you."

Stationery. Pens and blank paper were provided to all subjects, together with the testing material. All subjects of the Chinese-English group were provided with two types of dictionaries: An English-Chinese dictionary and a Chinese-English dictionary. However, none of the subjects from either group had used any dictionary during the data collection.

Data Analysis

There were three steps of investigation in the data analysis process in this study. The three steps were checking of grammatical and spelling mistakes, examining and comparing the groups on 4 formal linguistic aspects, and the investigation of 6 discourse features.

The first step was to check the grammatically related aspects of the written samples that were collected from the two groups. The second step was conducted for a further examination on linguistic related aspects between the two groups, such as the average length of word, average length of sentence, average length of written sample, and writing speed. The grammar checking and examination of four linguistic aspects were conducted in order to have an evaluation on the actual English proficiency level between the two groups. The investigation of 6 discourse features was conducted to find out the different discourse patterns between the two groups. The description of 6 discourse features is given in the following section. Computer programs were employed as tools on the grammar checking and statistical examination of the data through those three steps.

Discourse Features

Six discourse features were designed to distinguish a direct or an indirect approach of structuring one's expression in written language. These discourse features were compared within and between the Native-English and Chinese-English groups in this study

The Feature of Writing Type. A story type or non-story type was chosen as the distinguish criterion for this discourse feature. It described the format that was chosen by the subject in structuring the given written task.

The Feature of Opening Point. The feature of Opening Point was measured by the first sentence of a written sample. It was designed to describe the direct approach in discourse. According to Matalene (1985) and Young (1982, 1994), westerners, particular Americans, tend to give an important statement or topical sentence at the beginning of their discourse, while Chinese tend not to choose this approach.

The Feature of Background Information. This feature was measured by the first sentence of the written sample. It was designed to describe the indirect approach in discourse.

It should be pointed out that the feature of Background Information and Opening Point were both measured by the first sentence of a written sample. They are not independent variables since one who chooses to make the central point in the first sentence may not provide the background information there. Both features were necessary in this study, however, because there might have other possibilities, neither an opening point nor background information, in the first sentence.

The Feature of Explicit Cues. The use of explicit cues for order was measured by the lexical and syntactical markers, which indicate the serial order of the given pictures in the test (e. g. Picture 3). This feature was designed to describe a direct approach in discourse. According to Tyler (1992) and Tyler & Bro (1992), lexical and syntactical markers play a key role for a coherent discourse. They believed that the lack of these linguistic devices would have led to an ambiguous discourse.

The Feature of Implicit or Semantic Cues. The use of implicit or semantic cues for organization was also possible. This was measured by examining the written sample to see that it actually followed the serial order of the given pictures in meanings but without literally indicating the serial order of the given pictures. This feature was designed to describe an indirect approach in discourse.

The Feature of a Second Point. This feature was measured by a second point or thought that was given either at the middle or later part of a written sample. The Feature of a Second Point was designed to examine the theory proposed by Young (1982) that Chinese-English speakers tend to give a point or an important thought in the later part of their discourse.

Limitation of This Study

In this study, the sample size of subjects is relatively small, and the represented population was limited to an advanced educational level. Therefore, the results of the discourse pattern of the six structural features found in each group may not be generalized for any native English and Chinese-English speaker. Further research with a larger representation sample would be needed before the results could be generalized to a broader population. Also the data collected in this study were single small, writing samples to a particular set of pictures that may not have equally captured the interest of some subjects who were from different fields.

As a cross-language and cross-cultural study, this research was only conducted in English to investigate the independent cognitive role of one's native culture on discourse patterns. If this study could have been done in both English and Chinese or both in the US and China, the cognitive role of discourse pattern might be strengthened.

The researcher of this study is a native Chinese speaker who has studied in a major US university for 9 years. On one hand, the researcher may be very sensitive to the different discourse patterns between native English and Chinese-English speakers, as well as the discourse strategies and the related cultural values of the Chinese-English subjects. On the other hand, the researcher may not be equally sensitive and knowledgeable to the discourse characteristics and the related western values of the native English subjects. These particular language and cultural experiences may have been carried into the interpretation of this study.

CHAPTER IV

RESULTS

The collected data were examined as designed in Chapter III. There were three steps in the analysis: the grammar and spelling check, the examination and comparison on four formal aspects of writing, and the investigation of six structural features of discourse.

Grammar and Spelling Check

The grammar and spelling of the written samples collected from both groups were first examined by three versions of computer programs, Microsoft Word (1997), Microsoft Word (1995), and Correct Text (1992). A few grammatical and spelling mistakes were found in both groups. As a total, there was 1 grammatical mistake found from each of the two groups, while 2 spelling mistakes were found in the Chinese-English group and 1 in the Native-English group.

According to the computer grammar checkers, a same type of grammatical mistake was found from an American and Chinese graduate student who failed to provide a hyphen in similar expressions, such as "*a three year old boy*", rather than "*a three-year-old boy*".

This type of grammatical mistake may be better understood as careless than ignorance of English grammar. In addition, two spelling mistakes were found from a Chinese-English subject, among which, the word "*geographic*" was misspelled as

"*geophic*", while the plural form of the word "*toys*" was wrongly spelled as "*toies*". The subject drew lines under each wrong spelling and told the experimenter when submitting the written sample. The experimenter offered a suggestion of checking a dictionary and making corrections, but the subject refused it.

The misspelling plural form of the word "toys" was actually both a grammatical error and a misspelling. However, the subject acknowledged those mistakes. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to attribute them to an insufficient English proficiency of the subject. There is no further examination and comparison on the grammatical aspect between the two groups.

Formal Aspects of the Written Samples

In the second step, the written samples have been examined and compared with respect to formal aspects by a two-tail *t* test. Four formal aspects were compared between the two groups. The measures are the mean length of word (MLW), the mean length of sentence (MLS), the mean length of written sample (MLWS), and the speed, the mean words of minute (MWM).

The Mean Length of Word (MLW)

The mean length of word measures the average number of letters per word for each individual. The mean lengths per word were then compared between the two groups. Table 4.1 described the result of the test.

Table 4.1 The Mean Length of Word for the Native-English and Chinese-English Groups

Measures	Mean Length of Word	
	Native-English	Chinese-English
Mean	4.454	4.19
SE _D	0.144	
<i>t</i> value	2.42	
2-tailed <i>p</i>	0.042*	

The value of the two tail *t* test shows that on average, the subjects in the native English group used longer words than the Chinese-English subjects did in their written samples ($t = 2.42$, $p = 0.042$). The difference in the length of word between the two groups is small and may not meaningful.

The Mean Length of Sentence (MLS)

The mean length of sentence was measured by the average number of words that composed a sentence for each individual. The formal aspect of the mean length of sentence was compared between the two groups. Table 4.2 described the test result.

Table 4.2 The Mean Length of Sentence for the Native-English and Chinese-English Groups

Measures	Mean Length of Sentence	
	Native-English	Chinese-English
Mean	14.759	12.216
SE _D	1.642	
<i>t</i> value	1.55	
2-tailed <i>p</i>	0.16	

The *t* value on the measure of MLS does not show a significant difference between the two groups. ($t = 1.55$, $p = 0.16$). This result suggests that the subjects of both

groups have an equivalent linguistic capacity for composing sentences in this written task in English.

The Mean Length of Written Sample (MLWS)

The mean length of written sample was measured by how many words are contained in the total written sample averaged for each group. The formal aspect of the mean length per written sample was compared between the two groups. Table 4.3 describes these test results.

Table 4.3 The Mean Length of Written Sample for the Native-English and Chinese-English Groups

Measures	Mean Length per Written	
	Native-English	Chinese-English
Mean	101.1	231.67
SE _D	41.48	
<i>t</i> value	3.12	
2-tailed <i>p</i>	0.014*	

The value of the two-tail *t* test indicates a significant difference between the two groups. However, on this measure the result indicates that the Chinese-English subjects wrote more words per written sample than did the Native-English subjects on average ($t = 3.12$, $p = 0.014$). This result suggests, at least, that the Chinese-English subjects were not less capable of writing in English than that of the American graduate student in this study.

The Mean Speed

The mean speed was measured by the average number of words written per minute for each individual. The average or mean speed was then compared between the two groups. Table 4.4 described the test result.

Table 4.4 The Mean Speed for the Native-English and Chinese-English Groups

Measures	Mean Words per Minute	
	Native-English	Chinese-English
Mean	17.6	5.34
SE _D	1.749	
<i>t</i> value	7.02	
2-tailed <i>p</i>	0.001***	

The *t* value on this measure shows that on average, the Native-English group was significantly faster in writing English than was the Chinese- English group ($t = 7.02$, $p < 0.001$). It was not an unexpected result since English is the first language of the Native-English subjects, while it is a second language of the Chinese-English subjects in the study.

Investigation on Six Structural Features of Discourse

The third step was the investigation on six structural features of discourse of the data. Data examinations and comparisons were conducted within each group and between two groups.

The six examined features in discourse structure are the type of writing, the opening point, the opening background information, the explicit markers on the serial

order of the given pictures, the content or semantic connection, and the second point.

Table 4.5 described the distribution of six structural features in each group.

Table 4.5 The Distribution of Six Structural Features in the Native-English and Chinese-English Groups

Structural Features	Native-English group (n=9)		Chinese-English group (n=9)	
	Yes	No	Yes	No
1. Writing Type (Story/Non-story)	2	7	8	1
2. A point in the first sentence	8	1	1	8
3. Beginning with background information	0	9	8	1
4. Explicit markers on the serial order of the given pictures	5	4	0	9
5. Implicit or Semantic structure on the serial order of the given pictures	3	6	8	1
6. A second point or thought	2	7	8	1

As can be seen in Table 4.5, the distribution of six discourse features was in a contrasting pattern between the two groups. The written samples of the two groups display a striking contrast in almost all six structural features of discourse.

Within the Chinese-English group, subjects showed a highly consistent pattern on each discourse features. Among 9 subjects, 8 chose story type in their writing, only one made an opening point, 8 started with background information, none chose explicit cues to structure their writing, 8 used implicit or semantic structure, and 8 gave a second point or thought in their writing.

On the other hand in the Native-English group, there was inconsistency on at least two of six structural features of discourse, Explicit cues and Implicit or semantic cues, while a consistent pattern was showed on the other four discourse features. Among 9

subjects, 2 chose a story as the writing type, 8 made an opening point, none started with background information, and 2 gave a second point or thought in their writings. Non-parametric tests were employed to test the consistency within each group and the significant differences between the two groups.

Consistency of Each of the Six Discourse Features within Each Group

The Kolmogorov-Smirnov Goodness of Fit Test (K-S Test) was employed to examine the consistent pattern of each the 6 discourse features within each of group. The test results have been described respectively.

The Pattern of Each Structural Feature within the Native-English Group. The consistency of each structural feature has been tested within the Native-English group by the K-S Test. Table 4.6 described the results of the test.

Table 4.6 The Pattern of Each Structural Feature Within the Native-English Group (n=9)

Structural Features (Within the Native-English Group,	Choice		Result of the K-S Test	
	Yes	No	Z	2-tailed p
1. Writing type (Story or Non-	2	7	1.412	0.037*
2. A point in the first sentence	8	1	1.558	0.016*
3.Beginning with background	0	9	--	--
4. Explicit markers on the serial order of the given pictures	5	4	1.068	0.204
5. Implicit or semantic structure on the serial order of the given pictures	3	6	1.243	0.091
6. A second point or thought	2	7	1.412	0.037*

As can be seen in Table 4.6 that within the Native-English group, feature 1, the writing type, has been found significant ($Z = 1.412$, 2-tailed $p=0.037^*$). The result indicates a consistent tendency that the American subjects did not prefer to employ a story type to structure the written task given in this study.

Feature 2, the opening point, was also found having a significant effect ($Z = 1.558$, 2-tailed $p= 0.016^*$). The result has revealed that most of the American subjects preferred to make an opening point to structure their written discourses.

The third discourse feature, beginning with background information, has produced no K-S Z and p values due to the fact that none of the American graduate students chose to begin with background information to structure the given written task. The pattern is highly consistent.

No significant effect has been found on feature 4, using explicit-cues to organize the writing ($Z = 1.068$, 2-tailed $p= 0.204$). The explicit cue refers to the lexical markers that name the serial order of the given pictures. This test result indicates that the American graduate students have not significantly preferred to use explicit connection cues to organize the given written task in this study.

Neither, was there a significant effect on feature 5, using implicit or semantic cues to organize the writing ($Z = 1.243$, 2-tailed $p= 0.091$). Implicit or semantic cues refer to those lexical markers that connect the written sample without literally indicate the given order but actually following the content of the series of the pictures. The test results indicate that neither implicit nor explicit cues are consistently chosen by subjects in the Native-English group.

The effect of the sixth structural feature, giving a second point or thought in a writing, has been found significant ($Z = 1.412$, 2-tailed $p = 0.037^*$). The result indicates a consistent tendency that the subjects in the Native-English group have not preferred to employ a second point or thought in their written discourses in the study.

The Pattern of Each Structural Feature within the Chinese-English Group. The consistency of each discourse feature has been also tested within the Chinese-English group by the K-S Test. Table 4.7 described the test results.

Table 4.7 The Pattern of Each Structural Feature within the Chinese-English Group (n=9)

Structural Features (Within the Chinese-English	Choice		Result of the K-S Test	
	Yes	No	Z	2-tailed p
1. Writing type (Story or Non-	8	1	1.558	0.016*
2. A point in the first sentence	1	8	1.558	0.016*
3. Beginning with background	8	1	1.558	0.016*
4. Explicit markers on the serial order of the given pictures	0	9	--	--
5. Implicit or semantic structure on the serial order of the given pictures	8	1	1.558	0.016*
6. A second point or thought	8	1	1.558	0.016*

As can be seen in Table 4.7, within the Chinese-English group, the subjects showed a highly consistent tendency on all the six structural features in their written discourses.

Among the native Chinese speakers, the effect of feature 1, the writing type, has been found significant ($Z = 1.558$, 2-tailed $p = 0.016^*$). The result indicates a consistent tendency that the Chinese-English graduate students have chosen a story type to structure their written task.

The effect of feature 2, the opening point, has been also found significant ($Z = 1.558$, 2-tailed $p = 0.016^*$), but in the negative direction. The result indicates that, consistently, the Chinese-English subjects have not preferred making an opening point to structure their written samples in the study.

On the third discourse structure, the background information, a significant effect has been found ($Z = 1.558$, 2-tailed $p = 0.016^*$). The result reveals that consistently, the Chinese graduate students have preferred beginning with background information to structure their written task.

There has no K-S Z and p values produced on feature 4, explicit cues, in the Chinese-English group, because of the high consistency that no Chinese subject has chosen this structural approach to organize their written task.

On the fifth discourse feature, implicit or semantic cues, a significant effect has been found ($Z = 1.558$, 2-tailed $p = 0.016^*$). The result indicates that the Chinese graduate students have consistently preferred this discourse strategy to organize the given written task.

The effect of feature 6, the use of a second point or thought, has been also found significant ($Z = 1.558$, 2-tailed $p = 0.016^*$). The test result reveals that the Chinese subjects have preferred to employ a second point or thought to structure their written samples in the study. The significance on all the six of discourse features has revealed a distinct and consistent discourse pattern in the group of the Chinese-English subjects in this study.

The Consistent Overall Pattern of 6 Structural Features within Each Group

The Friedman Two-way Analysis of Variance (Anova) Test has been employed to examine the consistency of discourse pattern of a group, which is indicated by the interactive effect of six structural features within each group. Table 4.8 described the test results.

Table 4.8 Significance of 6 Discourse Features within Native-English & Chinese-English Groups

The Interactive Effect of Six Structural Features of	Within Each Group	
	Native-	Chinese-
Cases	9	9
D. F.	5	5
Chi-Square	11.429	21.571
Significance	0.0435*	0.0006***

The test results showed a significant interactive effect of 6 discourse features in both the Native-English group (Chi-Square = 11.429, Significance = 0.044*) and the Chinese-English group (Chi-Square = 21.571, Significance = 0.001***). The results indicate that each group has shown a distinct and consistent discourse pattern, respectively. Even though two of the 6 discourse features have been found to be not significant as individual items within the Native-English group, the discourse pattern is significant when all 6 structural features function as a whole,

The Differences in Discourse Patterns between the Two Groups

The Friedman Two-way Anova Test was also employed to examine the significant difference in discourse patterns between the two groups. The difference is

indicated by the interactive effects of six structural features between two the groups.

Table 4.9 described the result of the comparison.

Table 4.9 Significant Difference in Discourse Patterns between the Native-English and Chinese-English Group

Comparison on the Interactive Effects of Six Structural Features between the Native-English and Chinese-English Groups	
Cases	9
D. F.	11
Chi-Square	41.308
Significance	0.0001***

As can be seen in Table 4.9, a highly significant effect (Chi-Square =41.308, Significance = 0.0001***) has been found in the comparison between the two groups. The test result has indicated that discourse patterns, as a whole, have been differently preferred by subjects in the Native-English and the Chinese-English groups respectively.

The Difference in Each Individual Discourse Feature between the Two Groups

The Wilcoxon Matched-Pairs Single-Ranks Test (Wilcoxon Test) has been employed to compare the differences on each individual structural feature between the Native-English and Chinese-English Group. Table 4.10 described the comparative results.

Table 4.10 Difference in Each Individual Structural Features between the Native-English and Chinese-English Group

Comparison on each of 6 Structural Features between Two Groups	Z	2-tailed p
1. Writing type (Story or non-story)	2.201	0.028*
2. A point in the first sentence	2.366	0.018*
3. Beginning with background	2.521	0.012*
4. Explicit markers on the serial order of given pictures	2.023	0.043*
5. Implicit or semantic structure on the serial order of given pictures	2.023	0.043*
6. A second point or thought	2.366	0.018*

As can be seen in Table 4.10, a significant difference between the two groups has been found on all the 6 structural features, which indicates a significant difference between each paired individual discourse feature. Being consistent to the patterns found within the groups, feature 1, 2, 3, and 6 have showed a significant difference, respectively, between the two groups.

The result on feature 1, writing type ($Z=2.201$, 2-tailed $p=0.028^*$) indicates that American and Chinese graduate students had significantly different preferences in choosing their writing type to structure the given written task. The comparative result of feature 2, an opening point, ($Z=2.366$, 2-tailed $p=0.018^*$) reveals the significant differences in selection of this discourse approach the two groups. The comparative result of feature 3, beginning with background information, ($Z=2.521$, 2-tailed $p=0.012^*$) also reveals that the subjects of the two groups have shown significantly different preferences on this discourse feature. The result of feature 6, a second point or thought, ($Z=2.366$, 2-tailed $p=0.018^*$) indicates that the American and Chinese-English graduate students have made significantly different selections on this discourse strategy.

The comparisons of discourse feature 4 and 5 have also indicated significantly different patterns between the two groups even though these two features were found not to be significant discourse characteristics with the Native-English group. The

comparative results of both feature 4, explicit cues, ($Z=2.023$, 2-tailed $p = 0.043^*$) and feature 5, implicit or semantic cues of the serial order of the given pictures, ($Z=2.023$, 2-tailed $p = 0.043^*$) indicate significant differences between the two groups. These comparative results have revealed a significant discourse tendency when the two groups were compared. In other words, using explicit or implicit cues the given written task were not significant tendencies among the American subjects. However, while compared with the patterns of the Chinese-English group, the discourse patterns on selecting these connection cues become salient for the American group. For example on feature 4, five of 9 American graduate students chose to use explicit connection cues to organize their written samples while none of the Chinese-English graduate student used this discourse strategy. On the other hand on feature 5, six of 9 Native-English subjects did not use the semantic connection cues, while eight of 9 Chinese-English subjects selected this discourse structural approach to organize their written task.

Summary

Three types of investigation have been conducted on the data in this study; the grammar and spelling check, a group comparison on four formal aspects of the written samples, and an examination and comparison of six discourse features.

First, with respect to grammar and spelling check, only one grammatical mistake has been found from a subject of each group, and two spelling mistakes were found from the Chinese-English group. With such a result, it was decided that there was no need for further examination and comparison of the grammatical aspects of the data.

Secondly, an investigation was conducted on the mean length of word, mean length of sentence, mean length of written sample, and mean speed of each group, and the means were compared between two groups as well. Among 4 pairs of means, 3 were found to have a significant difference. Subjects of the Native-English group were found, on average, to use longer words and write significantly faster than subjects of the Chinese-English group; while Chinese-English subjects were found to have produced longer written products, on average, than that of Native-English subjects. No significant difference was found on sentence length between the two groups.

Finally, six discourse features were examined, individually and interactively within each group and between two groups. Significant differences between the two groups have been found in each individual discourse feature. Within the Chinese-English group, a highly consistent discourse pattern has been found in all the 6 individual discourse features. Within the Native-English group, two of the six individual features, explicit-cues and implicit-cues, have been found to have an inconsistent discourse pattern, while the other 4 individual discourse features have shown significant consistency.

Within each group, as well as between the two groups, the significant interactive effects of the six structural features have indicated that both groups show a distinct and consistent discourse pattern, respectively. The distinct discourse patterns found from the two groups, however, are significantly different from each other.

CHAPTER V

INTERPRETATION, DISCUSSION AND CONCLUSIONS

The findings in this study have demonstrated that native English and Chinese speakers prefer different discourse patterns in their language expressions (Young, 1982, 1994; Scollon and Wong-Scollon, 1991, 1995; Matalene, 1985). Also, the results of the investigation lend weight to the study hypothesis that the preferred discourse structures between the Native-English and Chinese-English groups are an independent factor from that of the subjects' English proficiency. In this chapter, the results of this study are interpreted and discussed from two angles: Independent role of discourse pattern from language proficiency and the different patterns with respect to the six discourse features between the two groups and the related cultural values.

Independence of Discourse Pattern from Language Proficiency

Subjects who were highly advanced in English proficiency were selected in this study to examine whether a discourse pattern is an independent factor, or whether it is dependent on one's language proficiency in written English. In addition to the standards of subject selection, the English proficiency of the Chinese and English subjects was further compared within the study. The written samples have been examined and compared in grammar and spelling and four formal linguistic aspects by employing the computer software, Statistic Package of Social Sciences (SPSS). The Chinese speakers

demonstrated high English proficiency yet clear differences in discourse pattern remain between the two groups.

Little Influence from Language Proficiency: Discussion on Grammar and Spelling Check

As indicated in Chapter four, a few mistakes in grammar and formal linguistic aspects were found in the two groups. The trivial difference in the English proficiency between the subjects of the two groups suggests that the language proficiency of the subjects have little influence on the different discourse patterns found from the native English and Chinese-English speakers in written English.

Carelessness. As pointed out in Chapter IV, only a same type grammatical mistake was found from an American and a Chinese graduate student who failed to provide a hyphen in similar phrases, such as '*a three year old boy*' rather than '*a three-year-old boy*'. This type of grammatical mistake may be better understood as carelessness than ignorance of English grammar.

Two spelling mistakes were also found from a Chinese-English subject. However, the subject highlighted those mistakes by underlining them, as well acknowledged the misspellings to the researcher when the written sample was submitted. Under the circumstance, the subject was allowed to use a dictionary to make the correction but s/he refused to do so. Therefore, it may not be appropriate to attribute the misspellings to insufficient English proficiency of the subject.

With such a negligible result of the grammar and spelling check from the two groups, no further examination and comparison were considered as necessary. As well, the factor of grammar and spelling has been considered to have no significant effect on the different discourse patterns found between the two groups in this study.

Compatible Capacities of Composition in Written English between the Two Groups

The results of the comparison of four formal linguistic-aspects suggest that subjects of the two groups showed compatible capacities in written English for composing in the given task in this study. As indicated in Chapter IV, there was no significant difference found from the comparison of the Mean length of sentence ($t= 1.55$, two-tailed $p = 0.16$) between the two groups. On the other hand, the result of the comparison on the Mean length of written sample ($t= 3.12$, two-tailed $p = 0.014^*$) showed significant difference between the two groups. This result has indicated that, in average, the English-Chinese subjects wrote a longer response than the Native-English subjects did in the study. The comparisons on the formal linguistic aspects of Mean length of sentence and Mean length of written sample indicated that on average, at least, the subjects of the Chinese-English group showed a compatible capacity of structuring sentences and English composition to that of the Native-English subjects in written English.

As non-native English users, the subjects in the Chinese-English group produced longer written samples on average. This was not a predicted result. It may be attributed to a complex of factors beyond the scope of this study. For example, individual' attitudes to

the task, preferred rhetorical approaches, and different written styles, each might have influenced the length of a written product. Further investigations are needed before drawing a conclusion on the causal reason of such a result.

The other two formal linguistic aspects, Writing speed and Mean length of word, were found significantly different between the two groups ($t=7.02$, two-tailed $p < 0.001^{***}$, $t=2.42$, two-tailed $p=0.042^*$, respectively). The results revealed that the American graduate students wrote much faster and used longer words on average than the Chinese graduate students did in this study. However, these two linguistic aspects are not considered to have a decisive influence on the different discourse structures between the two groups in this study.

A conclusion may be drawn based on the results of the grammar and spelling check and the comparisons of four formal linguistic aspects, that there has no difference found in the language proficiency of the subjects between the two groups in this study. Therefore, language proficiency should not be responsible for the different discourse patterns, which were found between the two groups in this study. In other words, if any different discourse patterns have been found between the two groups in this study, the discourse patterns seem independent from the subjects' English proficiency. The grammatically related linguistic aspects, such as syntactic cooperation, lexical discourse markers, tense/aspects, and lexical specification, were not found in this study. Therefore, the linguistic aspects are not considered as a decisive factor to vary discourse patterns in performance of non-native English speakers, as suggested by Tyler and others (1988, 1992, 1993). Specifically in this study, English proficiency is not considered to have been a decisive influence on the subjects' discourse structures in their written English.

Discourse Pattern as a Result of Socialization

From a developmental viewpoint, one's discourse pattern may be a relatively stable and independent cognitive structure as a result of socialization along with the first language acquisition from one's early childhood. Conceptually, discourse pattern refers to a different cognitive aspect from language proficiency. A language discourse pattern is heavily related to social cognitions such as socially accepted patterns and culturally valued models in interpersonal communication (Quinn and Holland, 1987). Such discourse structures carry out an individual's values and standards of interpersonal relationship and social interactions. These are cognitive strategies that may not have been changed no matter whether the first or a second language is employed, unless one has consciously denied and changed her/his original values and standards. Discourse strategies and linguistic proficiency may belong to different cognitive structures that are independent from one and another. For example, to make a point at the beginning or end of an expression may not be determined by one's linguistic proficiency.

On the other hand, language proficiency refers to the skill level of using linguistic devices to meet linguistic rules. The skill level may be relatively changeable and improved by practice in any stage of one's life, which may be particularly true in a second language process. An insufficient English proficiency may have led to poor comprehensibility of expressions in English. In such cases, however, the poor comprehensibility is the result of a limited English capacity that has failed to present well and polish the employed structural or discourse pattern, rather than the failure of the discourse pattern itself. In other words, the poor comprehensibility is the result of

contamination of the insufficient language proficiency rather than the characteristics of the used discourse structure.

The above statement seems not to support the perspective held by Tyler and Bro. They state that the unexpected discourse pattern of non-native English speakers "is better understood as the cumulative result of interacting miscues at the discourse level, that is, miscues in syntactic cooperation, lexical discourse markers, tense/aspects, and lexical specification." (Tyler and Bro, 1992, p. 71)

It should be pointed out that Tyler's conclusion was drawn from a study that did not well separate the variable of discourse strategies from the English proficiency of the Chinese-English speaker. It may be a common experience, for example, that Asians, such as Chinese, Japanese, and Koreans, are often perceived as making similar grammatical mistakes in English (Tyler, 1988, 1992; Young, 1982, 1994; Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Yumada, 1997). The similarity of their grammatical mistakes has been explained as a common feature of the discourse pattern of those populations. Such a perspective, however, may have mistakenly treated one's linguistic proficiency as one's cognitive strategies in discourse. Certainly it is understandable that insufficient English proficiency will lead to a variety of inappropriate language expressions in English. However, the perceived inappropriateness may be more related to grammatical errors than to the structural frame of the language expression. One's English proficiency may indicate how well the individual uses English, but it is not able to indicate in which way and how the individual will express his/her mind.

Two Points Drawn from the Discussion. Two points can be drawn from the above discussion. First, it is important to distinguish the concepts between discourse pattern and linguistic proficiency in a discourse related, cross-language study. Without such a conceptual distinction, language proficiency may have been confused with discourse patterns and led to an unconvincing conclusion, as Tyler and Bro (1992) did in their study. Secondly, different discourse patterns in cross language communication may have been better understood if they are studied in a broader cultural scope than merely within the linguistic field.

Six Discourse Features and the Related Cultural Values between the Two Groups

Six discourse features were examined within each group as well as compared between the two groups in this study. The six discourse features were examined based on the subjects' responses to a projective testing material. As described in Chapter three, the stimulus material was composed of 6 pictures which were presented in a fixed order but without clear structural connection between the previous and next picture in the sequence of pictures. No language was contained in the stimulus material; however, the words in the instruction were designed to provide an ambiguous hint by the term "a story" in a statement "Please write a paragraph or two in response to the series of 6 picture. As you will, it can be a story or any type of writing." Three of the six discourse features, Writing type, Explicit cues, and Implicit or Semantic cues, were measured based on the conditions given by the stimulus material and Instruction. Under the circumstances, the subjects were given the choices to either write a story or a non-story (writing type), to use

the fixed series order of 6 pictures as connection cues (explicit cues), or to create connection cues based on the content of given pictures (implicit or semantic cues). The other three discourse features were Opening point, Beginning with background information, and Giving a second point or thought in a written sample.

As indicated in Chapter four, each of the six structural features has shown a consistent pattern within the Chinese-English group, while four of the six features were significantly consistent within the Native-English group. The interactive pattern of the six discourse features, which work as a whole, was found significantly consistent within each of the groups. Furthermore, the interactive discourse patterns were found significantly different between the two groups.

Contrasting Discourse Patterns of Each Structural Feature between the Two Groups

When compared between the two groups, contrasting and consistent discourse patterns on each of the six discourse features were remarkably consistent. For example, on the feature of writing type, eight of the nine subjects in the Chinese-English group chose a story type while seven of the nine subjects in the Native-English group chose a non-story type. On the feature of Opening Point, eight of the nine American graduate students made the main point in their first sentence, while eight of the Chinese-English subjects did not make a point in their first sentence. Instead, eight out nine Chinese graduate students started with background information, while none of the American subjects did. Such contrasting patterns were found on every discourse feature between the two groups. Predictably, the interactive patterns of the six features between the two groups were consistently different as well.

The Related Cultural Values

Discourse Patterns and the Related Values in the Native-English Group. Four of the six discourse features showed a consistent pattern respectively within the Native-English group. Briefly, the American subjects showed a strong pattern on starting writing with a main point in the first sentence ($Z = 1.558$, $p = 0.016^*$). Background information did not appear exclusively in the beginning of their writing, even if no point was given in the first sentence. A second point was not usually employed ($Z = 1.412$, $p = 0.037^*$), and most of the American graduate students chose a free writing type rather than a story to organize the given task ($Z = 1.412$, $p = 0.037^*$). Such patterns may have reflected valued discourse strategies in western cultures, which emphasizes a linear, straightforward, and detextualized structure of written products (Caldas-Coulthard & Coulthard, 1996; Conner & Kaplan, 1987; Sinclair, 1994, 1993; Tadros, 1994; Fowler, 1996; Matalene, 1985; Hsu, 1981; and many others). Beginning with an opening point, as well as without being distracted by a second point or thought, would make a discourse structure straightforward following a linear connection (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991, Young, 1994).

As Matalene said, the subjects of the Native-English group were “profoundly affected by the fact that we are post-romantic Westerners, teaching and writing in the humanities. As such, we value original and individuality, what we called the ‘Authentic Voice.’” (1985, p. 790)

Such a valued ‘authentic voice’ in western culture may be also a good interpretation to the other two structural features, Explicit connection cues ($Z=1.068$, $p=0.204$) and Implicit or Semantic connection cues ($Z=1.243$, $p= 0.091$), which indicated

an inconsistent pattern respectively in each of the two discourse features. In other words, the American subjects did not show a significant preference for either of the two discourse patterns. They simply made a choice individually and freely. Though there has been a stereotype held by Asians that westerners, particular Americans, prefer an explicit discourse approach in language expressions (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Young, 1982, 1994; Creel, 1953; Hsu, 1981; Matalene, 1985; Smith, 1894) the finding in this study may not support such a perspective without comparative conditions.

Discourse Patterns and the Related Values in the Chinese-English Group. On the other hand, in the Chinese-English group, all the six discourse features shown a consistent pattern respectively. Briefly, most Chinese graduate students preferred a story type to organize the given written task ($Z=1.558$, $p=0.016^*$). The discourse approach of starting with an opening point was avoided ($Z=1.558$, $p=0.016^*$). Instead, beginning with background information was preferred ($Z=1.558$, $p=0.016^*$). Remarkably, the Explicit Connection Cues were exclusively avoided while the Implicit or Semantic Connections were significantly chosen ($Z=1.558$, $p=0.016^*$). Furthermore, most of the Chinese graduate students have given a second point or thought in their written samples ($Z=1.558$, $p=0.016^*$).

The tendency of avoiding an opening point and beginning with background information has been found very significant as indirect discourse patterns within the Chinese-English group. For example, eight of the nine Chinese subjects avoided an opening point in their writings. Even for the one who did begin with a point, the starting

point was turned to be an arguable or background point leading to the second point that developed later along a carefully arranged argument.

In addition, the consistency of giving a second point may have also reflected an indirect discourse pattern. It is as observed by Young that "There is a Chinese preference for the steady unraveling and build-up of information before arriving at the important message." (Young, 1982, p77)

Trying to avoid confrontation and aggressiveness may be an important reason that the Chinese subjects tended to start with background information rather than beginning with the key point in their first sentence. The purpose of such discourse strategies, as many have pointed out, is to maintain a harmonious interpersonal relation (Young, 1982, 1994; Scollon and Wong-Scollon, 1991, 1995; Matalene, 1985; Creel, 1953; Smith, 1894). The cultural influence on the discourse patterns in the Chinese-English group is thus very obvious. It is as observed by Matalene that "To achieve social harmony and to express the views of group by referring to tradition and relying on accepted patterns of expression were the central purposes and practices of Chinese rhetoric." (1985, p.795)

Collectivism vs. Individualism. Comparatively, Americans are more individual-centered, while Chinese are more group and situation-centered (Hsu, 1981, 1953; Smith, 1894). These contrasting human orientations have been fostered by oriental collectivism and western individualism cultures respectively (Young, 1982, 1994; Matalene, 1985; Scollon and Wong-Scollon, 1991; Yumada, 1997). Such cultural influences may have been reflected by the contrasting discourse patterns of the two groups. As responses to the stimulus material in this study, for example, most of the Chinese subjects chose a

story type while most of the American subjects chose non-story that came out a variety of types in this study. Recall that there was an ambiguous hint on “story” type, which was given in the Instruction. To a certain extent, the Instruction may have also served as an authority voice. Having grown up in a collective culture, the Chinese subjects may have been more familiar to highly emphasized “authority” than to one’s own ‘Authentic Voice’. It seemed that most of the Chinese subjects noticed the term “story” in the “Instruction” and accepted the suggestion consciously or unconsciously. Such an acceptance may be “natural” in the Chinese culture since it, again, would not create any conflict and would not confront others. It is as said by Matalene that “For the Chinese, then, the primary function of rhetoric is to preserve the general harmony and to promote social cohesion; and therefore, its appeal is always to history and to tradition and to the authority of the past.” (1985, p. 795)

On the other hand, having been fostered by Individualism, the American subjects seemed not to be influenced by the suggestion of “story” type at all. They simply wrote in their free ways and produced many that were categorized into the non-story type. The similar contrasting phenomena were also shown on the discourse features of connection cues between groups. The American subjects presented individual preferences in choosing either explicit or implicit connection cues, while the Chinese subjects exclusively avoided the use of explicit cues and 8 out of the nine chose implicit or semantic connection cues to organize their written samples.

Only when compared with such a consistent discourse pattern of the Chinese subjects, the American subjects showed significantly consistent patterns that indicate the American subjects, comparatively, have preferred the discourse feature of explicit cues

and did not prefer to use the implicit cues to structure their written samples. Under such a comparative condition, it may be true to say that westerners, particular Americans, prefer an explicit discourse approach in their language expressions (Scollon & Wong-Scollon, 1991; Young, 1982, 1994; Creel, 1953; Hsu, 1981; Matalene, 1985; Smith, 1894). When the six discourse features were analyzed within different cultural scopes, we may have a clear view on the power of the cultural values that have a strong influence to individuals' discourse strategies.

Cross-cultural comparisons may contribute to a better understanding of ones' own, as well as others' characteristics of discourse patterns, in order to reach better communication between the people who carry different cultural values. For example, Americans may not see themselves particularly preferring explicit and direct discourse approaches without a comparison with Chinese. On the other hand, from their own perspective, westerners may feel that Asians are too inscrutable or even ambiguous to understand, while Asians see only indirect discourses presenting appropriate politeness (Young, 1982, 1994; Scollon and Wong-Scollon, 1991; Yumada, 1997).

Consistent Interactive Discourse Patterns

As indicated at the beginning of this section, as well as in Chapter four, the interactive pattern of the six discourse features in each group is significantly consistent. Even though two of the six discourse features were not significantly consistent as individual elements within the Native-English group, the discourse pattern of the group is distinctively consistent when the six discourse features work interactively as a whole

(Chi-Square = 11.429, $p = 0.0435^*$). It is not surprised to see that the interactive discourse pattern in the Chinese-English group is also significantly consistent (Chi-Square = 21.571, $p = 0.0006^{***}$), since all individual discourse features showed a consistent pattern respectively within the Chinese-English group. When the interactive discourse patterns of the two groups were compared, the result, as can be predicted, has indicated a significant difference (Chi-Square = 41.308, $p = 0.001^{***}$). These results have revealed that the subjects of the two groups not only formed their own distinctive discourse patterns as a whole, but also, the discourse patterns preferred by the two groups were significantly different from one and another. Such results have confirmed the assumption from Young, Matalene, the Scollons, Tyler, and many others.

Based on the previous discussion of each individual discourse feature in this chapter, the characteristics of the interactive discourse pattern in the Native-English group may be described as direct, straightforward, and linearly structured. While the characteristics of the interactive discourse pattern in the Chinese-English group may be described as indirect and cautious in making points. For example, the American tended to make the main point or important statement at the beginning of the written samples, and then went on in a straightforward fashion. While the Chinese-English subjects tended to provide background information first, and a second point or important message was often employed at a later part of the written samples. "To be indirect in both spoken and written discourse, to expect the audience to infer meanings rather than to have them spelled out is a defining characteristic of Chinese rhetoric" (Matalene, 1985, p. 801). As discussed above, the different discourse patterns between Americans and Chinese have been strongly influenced by their different native cultural values and traditions.

Conclusion

Based on the results of the investigation conducted in this study, two points can be drawn in the conclusion. First, language discourse is involves with, at least, linguistic and cognitive components. Second, an individual's discourse patterns are strongly influenced by one's native cultural values. Discourse pattern appears to be an independent cognitive structure. As cognitive structures, discourse patterns may be independent of one's language capacity or proficiency. An individual's language proficiency definitely plays an important role in one's language discourse. However, language proficiency is not the decisive factor in the choice of discourse patterns. Conceptually and practically, language proficiency only indicates how skillful an individual knows and uses linguistic devices to polish a desired discourse pattern. When language proficiency is considered responsible for the consistent discourse patterns, it may not be directly evident and convincing. From a developmental point of view, discourse patterns may be a result of socialization since one's early developmental stages. The internalized discourse patterns may remain relatively stable in one's life no matter whether expressed in a first or a second language performance. On the other hand, language proficiency may be relatively changeable and possibly improved in certain years along with practice, particularly in a second language. It may be always a desired goal for any one to improve language proficiency. However, it may not be equally a desirable goal for any one to change discourse strategies.

As a result of socialization, discourse patterns have been strongly influence by one's native cultural values. In some cultures, such as in China, "the hierarchy of culture,

language, and rhetoric has a powerful coherence or internal logic” (Matalene, 1985, p. 790). Therefore, language discourse studies may have received more comprehensive results in a broad cultural scope than merely limited within a linguistic field, particularly when cross-language or cross-cultural issues are related (Young, 1982, 1994). A cultural approach may become more and more important in cross-language discourse studies, as Matalene pointed out that "as our world becomes a global village in which ethno-centrism is a less and less appropriate response, we need to understand and appreciate rhetorical systems that are different from our own.” (1985, p. 790)

APPENDIX A

INFORMED CONSENT FORM

I am a doctoral student in the Human Development Program of the School of Education, the University of Massachusetts at Amherst. I need your support for a research project of "Preferred Participatory Attitude" in written English between native English and native Chinese students.

The purpose of the research is to investigate writing style of those who have grown up in different cultural backgrounds. The study is expected to contribute knowledge to a better understanding of inter-cultural communication between Americans and Chinese.

The research will need you to write a paragraph or two in response to a series of given pictures. The whole process will take you about 20 minutes. (However, if you need a longer time you may have it). We also request another sample of your writing. This can be a 1-2 page paper that you have written previously in your own field, such as the copy of a final paper, an observation, or an assignment, that was written in English. It should be in paragraph style and without formulae or symbols in your field of study. The data collected in this study will be used only for my dissertation and related publication.

Your participation in this research project is completely voluntary. You have no obligation to take part in this study. If you decide not to participate in this project, nothing will be held against you in any way. Your consent to participate does not mean that you are committed. You are free to withdraw at any time during the course of the study.

Every effort will be made to protect your anonymity and your privacy. Your identity will be protected by use of a code name for individual responses.

The results of the research will be made available to you upon your request. You will also have access to the dissertation and other written material resulting from this study.

I very much appreciate your time and your participation in my research project. If you have any questions or concerns about this project, please feel free to contact me by phone at (413) 323-6363, or by e-mail: yumin@educ.umass.edu, or in writing to Yumin Meng, 121 North Main St. Apt H-5, Belchertown, MA 01007.

APPENDIX B
THE INTRUCTION TO SUBJECTS

Please write a paragraph or two in response to the (attached) series of 6 pictures. As your will, it can be a story or any type of writing. Please give a title to your written product. Take as much time as you need. Dictionaries are allowed.

Thank you again for your time and participation.

APPENDIX C
THE INFORMATION SHEET

The subjects will be asked to complete a brief information form. The question sheet is as follows:

Please provide the following information. Thank you.

Your Academic field: _____

Sex: F M

Age: 21 - 25 26 - 30 31 - 35 36 - 40 41 - above.

Your native country _____

Your native language: _____

The year you came to the U. S. _____

The highest TOEFL score you have ever had: _____

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